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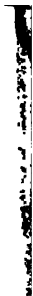
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PALM LEAVES.

PALM LEA

BY

RICHARD *MONCKTC

LONDON:

EDWARD MOXON, DOV

MDCCCKLIV.

EASTWARD roll the orbs of heaven,
Westward tend the thoughts of men :
Let the Poet, nature-driven,
Wander Eastward now and then.

There the calm of life comparing
With his Europe's busy fate,
Let him, gladly homeward faring,
Learn to labour and to wait.

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Dedication.

TO

M. GUIZOT,

MEMBRE DE L'INSTITUT, ETC. ETC. ETC.

MY DEAR SIR,

You will add one more to the favours which I owe to your friendship, if you will accept from me this little book with indulgence and good-will.

I have no compunction in dedicating an English work to you, to whom the graces and niceties of our language are as familiar as those of your own, nor in presenting a volume of Poems to a writer, who, in his profound analysis and eloquent record of the toils and triumphs of ages, has never forgotten the sacred history, of which the poet is historian, the history of the ideas and emotions of humanity.

I could not, indeed, find myself on the Eastern shores

of the Mediterranean, without being continually reminded that your task has now for many years extended itself into the sphere of political action, and that you have been required to supply the materials for future history: and I feel assured that it will be well remembered, that it is owing to your prudence and energy, in a dangerous crisis, that the countries I have lately visited with unmingled satisfaction, have not become the sources of infinite confusion and misery to our Western world, and are not associated with the most painful recollections in the mind of every traveller, both Englishman and Frenchman, who, looking beyond the limits of an exclusive nationality, can comprehend the large interests of civilisation and ponder the lofty possibilities of the destiny of the human race.

It was permitted to Mr. Pitt, in his opposition to Mr. Fox's East India Bill, to say, that the loss of all our Indian dominions would be an insignificant calamity, compared with the disturbance of the English Constitution. I would apply the analogy to the Oriental politics of our own time, and would avow my belief, that the acquisition of every province of the Ottoman empire, by France or

by England, would be a poor compensation to either country for the destruction of those peaceful relations between us, on which rest the happiness of the present and the worth of the future world.

The limited interference which we now agree to exercise in the governments of the East, appears to me but a just tribute to our Christian advantages, and most beneficial to those governments themselves. There can, indeed, be no doubt, that the endurance (I will not say permanence) of the Ottoman Empire, mainly depends on the wise use to be made of the counsel and assistance of those European powers, who are interested in its preservation. We have duties of protection to perform towards our Christian brethren, now subjected to Mohammedan rule, and it is our desire to accomplish that object without altering their present political relations, at least, until they acquire sufficient vigour to assert their political independence. Let, therefore, the Porte not force upon us any violent measures in defence of what we believe to be a social and religious obligation ;—let it abolish, as far as possible, intolerant laws and customs, and, where that cannot be done,

admit all executive mitigations of legislative bigotry;—let the rayah feel himself no longer a victim and an outcast, and I see nothing which should prevent the maintenance of Turkish power, until the occurrence of one of those moral earthquakes, whose moment it is idle to attempt to predict and whose effects lie only in the hand of God.

In this spirit, and in this hope, I dedicate to you these literary diversions of my Eastern tour, and request you to believe me,

My dear Sir,

Yours faithfully and obliged,

RICHARD M. MILNES.

PREFACE.

I TRAVELLED in the Levant and in Egypt in the winter of 1842-43, and should probably have written some account of my tour, but for one decisive consideration—I knew nothing of the languages of the countries I was visiting.

I was thus debarred from all that observation of the details of national and individual character which alone can make the record of a journey deservedly interesting beyond the sphere of the traveller's personal acquaintance, and was compelled to content myself with general impressions, conveyed by sight alone, or acquired through the casual interpretations of books and men.

I am not at all disposed to underrate the value of the knowledge thus obtained ; indeed I am not sure but that a just and acute mind may infer more, and more truly, in a limited space of time, from the common range of objects that offer themselves to the traveller's notice, than will be learnt from a partial and necessarily imperfect acquisition of new forms of speech. The great truths of philosophy, and even of science, have been guessed long before they have been proved : and thus features and dispositions of nature and humanity will frequently make themselves clear to the intellect of an original observer, which¹ it is the business of the philologist and historian afterwards to explain and to confirm.

But it is a different question when this knowledge (however valuable to the individual) comes to be communicated to the public, in the shape of a Book of Travels. Personal adventure must be of a rare and exciting character to claim a public interest ;

discoveries must be important and suggestive to fix public attention; and learning must be accurate and profound to invite the consideration of the public intelligence: literature will always gladly welcome such narratives as Park's and Bruce's, such investigations as Belzoni's and Col. Vyse's, such information as Burckhardt's and Wilkinson's,—but the general mass of Travels, Tours, and Journeys (especially in the East) can merit no other destiny than to interest the few who are already interested in the author—to throw a faint light on some chance subject of momentary importance—or, at best, to serve as a guide-book to sights and curiosities, for those who intend to go over the same ground. I had no desire to add to this already too numerous catalogue.

Yet there remained impressions on my mind, which I was willing to fix in some befitting form; there were ideas in which past history threw its shadows before me into the future, in shapes I did

not wish wholly to disappear ; there were observations of life and manners, which seemed contradictory to many established European notions regarding the East, and which therefore, if just, might have some small rectifying value ; there were thoughts, on matters deeply interesting to our moral being, evoked or illustrated by the objects that met my eye and by collateral reading ; there were images which to one accustomed to verse-writing naturally suggested themselves as materials of composition : and thus I have attempted to convey what was in itself general, in that language which delights in the universal, and which rejects the minute and transitory—the language of Poetry.

I cannot, however, say that I found the East poetical in that application of the word which suits the wants and feelings of our time : to interest or to benefit *us*, Poetry must be reflective, sentimental, subjective ; it must accord with the conscious,

analytical, spirit of present men ; it must be deeper than description, more lasting than passion, more earnest than pleasure ; it must help, or pretend to help, the mind of man out of the struggles and entanglements of life. But in the East such difficulties are not felt, such remedies are not required : unconscious passion, undoubted duty, unchallenged faith, there complete the history of humanity ; the reality of objects has there remained unquestioned, and mankind is, as it were, a mere portion of external nature, with higher faculties and a longer destiny. There have, indeed, been mystics in the East, asserting the right and power of spiritual intuition above all the restrictions of positive ordinance and material philosophy, but the motive-forces of mankind in those portions of the world have ever been Facts, and not Ideas, thus accounting for the absence of, and even animosity to, forms of Art, and the habitual confusion between the notions of Truth and Power.

Mohammed is always vindicating himself from the charge of being a Poet; he believed the character incompatible with the simple reality it was his business to declare and expound; nor does he attempt to fix the minds of his hearers on the excellence, justice, and benevolence of God, but on his sensible Omnipotence and on the folly of resisting his Will.

There may be, indeed there must be, in the interior habits of Oriental life more play of feeling than we perceive in the calm surface presented to our observation: but we travellers see so small a portion even of that surface, and are not only so ignorant of what lies below it, but have so misapprehended and falsified even the external relations of social existence in those countries, that one is almost afraid to conjecture where so many have been so grossly deceived.

I am not sure that the picture of ordinary life in

the East, as given in the poem of the Hareèm,* will not appear novel and strange ; for we have taken our notions of Eastern domesticity much more from the ballet than from reality, and have coloured them with so much ferocity and vice, that what is really commonplace becomes paradoxical. Polygamy is usually spoken of as the universal practice of the East, while a little inquiry will inform the traveller that it is a licence almost confined to the very wealthy, and by no means general even among them. A plurality of wives implies a plurality of houses, or apartments, with separate establishments, and this, of course, can be seldom afforded. Occasionally, the abuse occurs of a young wife being brought into the family to supersede the old one, who becomes degraded almost to a servant ; but this could hardly occur where the family of the first wife was of respectable rank in

* In the general confusion of the orthography of Eastern words, I have usually adopted that of Mr. Lane as most likely to be right, from that excellent gentleman's mature experience, profound learning, and careful judgment.

society, or where there had been any children, the character and position of the mother throughout the East being most scrupulously respected. The Woman there earns her dignity by maternity: the Sultana Vâlide is a greater personage than any European queen-mother; and the slave who bears a child to a Mohammedan father at once becomes free. This explains the terror of barrenness, visible in so many passages of the Hebrew scriptures, and the delight of the possession of children expressed in the Arab synonyme for them meaning "the freshness of the eye." The European notion that women, according to Mohammedan theology, are soulless, still very largely obtains, notwithstanding that the Kurán particularises "men and women" as being together at the day of judgment (ch. lvii. v. 12, 13), and defines the conditions under which faithful men should implore for them the mercy and pardon of God (ch. lx. v. 12).*

* The persisting ignorance on the spirit and habits of Oriental life among us is the less excusable since the publication of Mr.

It cannot be denied that the present intellectual state of the female mind in the East is pitifully low, and that civilisation is considerably retarded by this circumstance. The boy remains an inmate of the Harem till six or seven years old. Rarely is a woman found able to read—most rarely to write; so that, having nothing to teach their children, they dislike any mental instruction for them beyond the traditions of religion, which thus comes to the young mind through a medium of superstition and intolerance. *There* are taught the lessons so difficult for any after-education to eradicate; *there* is imbibed the contempt and detestation of the Frank, which so much obstructs our usefulness in those countries; *there* is learned that hatred of the Christian faith and

Urquhart's *Spirit of the East*, a work where the enthusiasm of the author in his subject implies no inaccuracy of detail, because that interest is founded not on any theory or caprice, but on an intimate knowledge and the experience of many years. This book should be diligently read, as a necessary prelude to the East, by all Englishmen intending to travel there.

name which so blinds the Muslim as to the present political and intellectual state of the world, and which is so little required by the precepts of the Kurán ; * and *there* is impressed that extravagance of national and religious pride which induces a disdain of all they cannot understand, and a misapprehension of the very supposed advantages they imitate. The intellectual education of the East must be through the women, to be effectual and lasting : but as regards the physical happiness of the weaker sex, and the regard paid to their well-being, I do not hesitate to say that I can find no superiority in the morals and manners of the West, and am led to fear that the evils connected with the relations between the sexes are more productive of suffering and debasement in many, so-called, Christian countries than in those that remain attached to the habits of the elder world.

No stronger instance could be given of the little

* Vide especially chap. ii. v. 59 ; and chap. v. v. 56.

attention paid by thoughtful men to these subjects than the usual estimation of the character of Mohammed. While Christianity was subdued at Grenada and Constantinople, and threatened at Tours and at Vienna ; while, by the offensive operations of the Crusades and the defensive positions of Malta, Venice, and Hungary, Europe rescued and preserved the modern ark of civilisation from the blind zeal of the followers of "the unlettered Prophet," as much as ever Greece guarded the ancient from the deluging armies of "the great King:" it was right, because it was necessary, to regard the founder of El Islam as an impostor and an adventurer. But, after the victory, more justice might have been looked for on the side of the conquerors ; when the enthusiasm had, in due time, evaporated, it was surely not advisable to hoard up the lees of prejudice and ignorance ; when Mohammed ceased to be considered as a devil, it was as well fairly to investigate and judge his demeanour as a man.

It is therefore of primary importance for every European traveller in the East to comprehend, or at least not to misapprehend, the character and history of that Mohammed, whose word has now lasted twelve hundred years, and is the life-guidance of one hundred and eighty millions of men.* For this purpose, let him first read perseveringly through the Kurán, in any of the good translations Europe possesses,† assisting himself by such illustrations and commentaries as may fall in his way.‡ He is not likely to find the occupation attractive at first, and he must be content to share the feeling of Göthe,§ the universal critic, who, after recounting the fabulous

* There can be no better introduction to this course of thought than Mr. Carlyle's lecture, "The Hero as Prophet," one of the boldest and most convincing vindications of the worth of a great man ever uttered or penned.

† Besides Sale's translation, we have in English "Lane's Selections from the Kurán," a book full of collateral information.

‡ Let me recommend Geroch's "Christologie des Koran," Hamburg, 1839; and Geiger's "Was hat Mohammed aus dem Judenthume aufgenommen," Bonn, 1833.

§ Vide "West-östlicher Divan," Art. Mahomet.

stories of Christian and Jewish religion, the amplifications of every kind, the boundless tautologies and repetitions that compose the body of this holy book, describes it as repelling you every time you approach it, then attracting you as you advance, then impressing you with a feeling of astonishment, and at last forcing from you a sense of respect and admiration. Of course, it is impossible to calculate how much we lose by translation, and it seems doubtful whether a mere Arabic scholar could fully appreciate the extraordinary charm of diction which the Moham-medans frequently appeal to as a chief proof of the inspiration of the book, or enjoy all the graces and delicacies of that rhymed prose * which the Prophet, notwithstanding his disclaimer of the poetical character, seems to have used with so much success :

* To give an European a good idea of the effects of this rhymed prose, let him read " Die Verwandlungen des Abu Seid," translated by Rückert. Stuttgard, 1837.

the spontaneous utterance of many of these passages appears to have rapt his hearers in wonder and delight, and to have gone far in authenticating his divine mission. This fact is the more remarkable from the entire absence of artistic intention in the book, and from the Prophet's continual assertion, that he is not imparting instruction or amusement, but promulgating a truth and enforcing a law,—a principle that not only excuses, but almost necessitates monotony and repetition ; for belief is given to what is distinct, simple, and uniform, rather than to the variety that pleases the imagination or the comprehensiveness that contents the understanding: it is only by an innumerable succession of strokes that a thought is driven into the world, and it is with this consideration that the Kurán may be most satisfactorily studied. In the Poem entitled “Mohammedanism” I have attempted to collect some striking images and aspects of life from the sacred book, and

to form them into a clear representation of the meaning of the religion ; I have made it as objective as I could, that is, I have introduced as little as possible of my own. The subjects of the "Legends" I found either in the Kurán or its commentators.

There is little need to exhort any one who has learnt all he can from books of the nature and spirit of Mohammedanism, to treat with respect and to observe with interest the ceremonial observances and practical working of the religion. For my own part, I never experienced a stronger impression than the first day I spent in a Mohammedan country: it is like returning, at one leap, to the old dispensation—to the condition of mankind standing, without mediation, without sympathy, alone, beneath the will and might of God. There the whole of life goes on in the distinct presence of the Invisible ; there prayer is no special mental process, but a plain act of dutiful service, a mere obedience of the laws and conditions of exist-

ence ; there reverence is the distinction between man and the inferior animals, and the scoffer and scorner would be rebels against the common sense and decency of mankind. This feeling accounts for much of the Mahommedan estimation and treatment of Franks in religious matters. The Roman Catholic and Greek churches are generally believed to include all Christians, and both these forms of worship appear to them idolatrous, and thus treasonable against the one absolute God. Protestantism, from its absence of symbols and its reverence for the written word, would have more points of contact with them but for its apparent disregard of the duty of Prayer. Protestants are called "men without prayer:" and, in fact, are generally looked on as atheists. An Imân, when told that the Protestants prayed in private, shook his head doubtfully, and said, "No, no,—Prayer is much too good an act to be concealed, were it done at all ; nobody could be ashamed of it." The mission of the

Bishop of Jerusalem as a Legate to the historical birth-place of Christianity, and the open performance of our simple and decorous ritual, if we ever succeed in erecting a church there, may, perhaps, have some effect in disabusing the Eastern mind on this subject, and bring Christianity before them in a totally new light, inoffensive to their national and family feelings, and cognate, in many important points, to their present notions of the relation of God to man.

I regret to say, that the prejudices raised against the Christian doctrines are rather confirmed than dispelled by the general demeanour of the Franks in the East : * the Orientals are continually reproaching us

* I would not pass over a signal exception to the general disregard shown to the religion of the country by European travellers, viz., the "*Voyage en Orient*," of M. de Lamartine. In this work there is a great appreciation of religious influences, and a fine sympathy with religious emotion. Altogether it is a valuable addition to the traveller's library ; many descriptions which at this distance seem wearisomely minute, are read with great interest on the spot, and much that has been blamed as vague sentiment is felt to be the real feeling that lies at the heart of the East. The best travels are those which give the most satisfaction to travellers going over the same ground.

with pretending to a theory of morality higher than theirs, and at the same time practising an unbounded licence of manners and doing anything for gain. I have expressed this sentiment and the consequent dread of Frank contamination among the more respectable Muslims, in "The Turk at Constantinople," and in "The Mosque." I have portrayed what I believe to be the view in which that edifice is usually regarded, and the causes of their abhorrence of Christian intrusion within its walls. There is still a Mosque at Constantinople which no firman can be obtained to visit, and the presence of a high officer in the service of Mehemet Ali is not sufficient to obtain access to the most sacred of the Mosques at Cairo. I may here mention that the confiscation and appropriation of church property (if the term may be allowed) in both Turkey and Egypt, has been so enormous of late years, that not only some of the finest and most historical buildings are falling fast to decay, but that the suppression of the charitable

institutions connected with them, and the impoverishment of their schools and colleges, (for instance, that of El-Azhar, the Oxford of Arabia and Egypt,) must tend strongly to the religious and moral debasement of the people.

Western civilisation has as yet produced little else but unmixed evil in the East. The old and appropriate costume has in most places made way for some mongrel modification of Frank dress, and it is the universal remark that the change in the general appearance of the men is such as to have destroyed all our illusions as to their personal attractions. One taste the East fortunately preserves unchanged, that for gay and brilliant colour, and the blacks and browns of our Northern climate do not yet in masses affront the Oriental sun. Temperance, the cardinal Mohammedan virtue, is fast giving way before our temptations and example: the ravages of alcohol are not confined to the "far west" and the "red men;" already they are wasting the energies of

the wealthier classes in the Turkish empire, and corrupting that excellent example of Mohammedan peasantry, the inhabitants of Asia Minor. At the same time it cannot be denied, that contact with European modes of thought and life has much humanised the violences of political and religious bigotry, and we must look for good rather from indirect influences, than from any immediate imitation. Even every Turk feels his head safer on his shoulders since the edict of Gulháne, and the strong remonstrances made by France and England against late executions, for change of religious opinion, cannot but have a good effect. As far, indeed, as we know anything of the progress of the world, we cannot assume that any other conditions of civilisation are possible than those under which the great Christian nations are now living. Islam has had every chance of full development—wealth, extent of dominion, power, and time; but from these advantages it has derived little to elevate the mass of man-

kind and advance the great destinies of humanity. It is the last and greatest struggle of the monotheistic principle in religious philosophy, and, though magnificently sustained by the faith of empires and ages, it has failed. The future of the world is with us and our influences, and we must impart them to elder nations, whether we will or not, and whether the results of the instruction appear to be beneficial or injurious. Let us only improve ourselves, and thus become better objects of imitation.

“Eastern Thoughts” are poems suggested by observation and reading on those subjects. I have no intention of pretending that they would or could have been written by an Oriental poet, but, at the same time, I doubt much whether they would have occurred to me had I not visited and studied the East.*

* The “Sayings of Rabia,” p. 97, are a sufficient proof in themselves of the share Mohammedan women may take in religious thought.

Most interesting, indeed, is it to remark how mysticism has forced itself on Mohammedanism, demonstrating the impossibility of confining any vital religion within the bounds of legal restriction and positive ordinance. Islam has, probably from the first, contained some few men who would, or rather could not remain, slaves of the letter. "Everything shall perish," says the Kurán, (chap. xxviii. v. 88,) "except the face of God;" and in this and two or three other texts, the Mystics think they find a literal sanction of their principles.* But it is in Persia rather than in Arabia that religious mysticism has formed itself into a sect, and Sûfism is now the chief piety of central Asia. The different orders of Dervishes, whom the sensitive and prudent Ali encouraged, notwithstanding the Prophet's objections

* A most agreeable book on this subject is easily procured—Tholuck's "Bluthensammlung aus der Morgenländischen Mystik." Berlin. 1825.

to monkery, were never so successful in Arabia or Turkey. In those countries the outward and palpable has maintained its superiority, and the rise of the Wahabees, the Puritans of Islam, shows how little any imaginative religion had advanced in those countries. I have said that I have not attempted in these Poems to write as a Mohammedan or Eastern ; I have extended the same rule to all parts of this volume (with the exception, perhaps, of the "Song of the Wahabees") and have never attempted to conceal my Western personality. If I had desired merely to translate Eastern sentiments, I should have been much better employed in translating Eastern words at the same time ; but my object has been, as far as possible, to fuse together my own natural and national modes of thought and those of the Oriental province of the human mind ; I have thought as an educated Frank would think, taking the East as a basis of reflection, and avoiding, as much as I

could, any expression distinctly incongruous and any colouring clearly inappropriate. And I have had continually before me in this task that admirable model, the “West-östlicher Divan” of Göthe. With little or no knowledge of the Oriental languages, and before the present abundance of translations—at above the age of sixty*—Göthe set about writing a collection of Poems, which should be simple and original as the youth of the world, and worthy at once of his own wise maturity and of the advanced period of civilisation in which he lived.

* There are many graceful allusions to the personal circumstances of the Poet, which might be passed over by an inattentive reader; I will cite one as singularly delicate. The Poet Hatem is supposed to be speaking.

“Nur dies Herz es ist non Dauer,
Schwillt in jugendlichem Flor;
Unter Schnee und Nebelschauer
Rast ein Aetna dir hervor.

“Du beschämst wie Morgenröthe
Jener Gipfel ernste Wand,
Und noch einmal fühlet *Hatem*
Frühlingshauch und Sommerbrand.”

I think any one who has made the "Divan" the companion of his Eastern tour will acknowledge the wonderful success of this experiment, and feel more strongly than ever the genius of that consummate artist, to whom all faiths and feelings, all times and events, seem to have ministered, as certain of being well understood and rightly used as if their master had been Nature itself.

Truly has Rückert sung :—

 " Would you feast
 On purest East,
You must ask it of the self-same man,
 Who the best
 Has served the West
With such vintage as none other can :
 Now with Western rapture sated
 Eastern draughts he quaffs elated,
On his fresh luxurious Ottoman.

 Evening splendour
 Loves to render
Göthe homage as the Western star ;
 Lights of morning
 Joy, adorning

Him who triumphs in the Eastern car :
When they both combine their duty,
All the sky is flush with beauty,
One Divan of crimson burning far.

Could you know it,
When the Poet
Bares his arm, that he has fought so long ?
Age his lyre
Steeps in fire,
Tunes the strings and renovates the song :
In Iranian naphtha-waves,
See, his veteran soul he laves
As in Italian suns the boy grew strong.

In his veins
Youth remains,
Passion rages and affection glows ;
He is young,
Heart and tongue,
On his brow yet flourishes the rose :
If he must not live for ever,
From our love let nothing sever
His long age until his last repose ! " *

* Oestliche Rosen. Leipzig. 1822.

PALM LEAVES.

THE GREEK AT CONSTANTINOPLE.

THE cypresses of Scutari
In stern magnificence look down
On the bright lake and stream of sea,
And glittering theatre of town :
Above the throng of rich kiosks,
Above the towers in triple tire,
Above the domes of loftiest mosques,
These pinnacles of death aspire.

It is a wilderness of tombs,—
Where white and gold and brilliant hue
Contrast with Nature's gravest glooms,
As these again with heaven's clear blue :

The city's multitudinous hum,
So far, yet strikes the listening ear,—
But what are thousands to the sum
Of millions calmly sleeping here?

For here, whate'er his life's degree,
The Muslim loves to rest at last,
Loves to recross the band of sea
That parts him from his people's past.
'Tis well to live and lord o'er those
By whom his sires were most renowned,
But his fierce heart finds best repose
In this traditionary ground.

From this funereal forest's edge
I gave my sight full range below,
Reclining on a grassy ledge,
Itself a grave, or seeming so :
And that huge city flaunting bright,
That crowded port and busy shore,
With roofs and minarets steeped in light,
Seemed but a gaudy tomb the more.

I thought of what one might have hoped
From Greek and Roman power combined,
From strength, that with a world had coped,
Matched to the queen of human mind ;—
From all the wisdom, might, and grace,
That Fancy's gods to man had given,
Blent in one empire and one race,
By the true faith in Christ and Heaven.

The finest webs of earthly fate
Are soonest and most harshly torn ;
The wise could scarce discriminate
That evening splendour from the morn ;
Though we, sad students of the past,
Can trace the lurid twilight line
That lies between the first and last,
Who bore the name of Constantine.

Such were my thoughts and such the scene,
When I perceived that by me stood
A Grecian youth of earnest mien,
Well-suiting my reflective mood :

And when he spoke, his words were tuned
 Harmonious to my present mind,
As if his spirit had communed
 With mine, while I had there reclined.

“Stranger ! whose soul has strength to soar
 Beyond the compass of the eye,
And on a spot like this can more
 Than charms of form and hue descry,—
Take off this mask of beauty,—scan
 The face of things with truth severe,
Think, as becomes a Christian man,
 Of us thy Christian brethren here !

“Think of that age’s awful birth,
 When Europe echoed, terror-riven,
That a new foot was on the earth,
 And a new name come down from Heaven :
When over Calpe’s straits and steeps
 The Moor had bridged his royal road,
And Othman’s sons from Asia’s deeps
 The conquests of the Cross o’erflowed.

“ Think, if the arm of Charles Martel
Had failed upon the plain of Tours,
The fate, whose course you know so well,
This foul subjection had been yours :
Where then had been the long renown
France can from sire to son deliver ?
Where English freedom rolling down,
One widening, one continuous, river ?

“ Think with what passionate delight
The tale was told in Christian halls,
How Sobieski turned to flight
The Muslim from Vienna's walls :
How, when his horse triumphant trod
The burgher's richest robes upon,
The ancient words rose loud—‘ From God
A man was sent whose name was John.’ *

“ Think not that time can ever give
Prescription to such doom as ours,
That Grecian hearts can ever live
Contented serfs of barbarous powers :

* Historical.

THE TURK AT CONSTANTINOPLE TO THE
FRANK.

WHEN first the Prophet's standard rested on
The land that once was Greece and still was Rome;
We deemed that his and our dominion
Was there as sure as in our Eastern home :
We never thought a single hour to pause
Till the wide West had owned Mohammed's laws.

How could we doubt it ? To one desert tribe
The truth revealed by one plain-seeming man
Cut off the cavil, thundered down the gibe,
And formed a nation to its lofty plan :
What barrier could its wave of victory stem ?
Not thy religious walls, Jerusalem !

The impious wars that stained the faithful host,
Might for some years the ripe success delay ;

But when we once stood firm on Europe's coast,
'Twas as the dawning of that final day,
That could not close till Islam's flag was furled
O'er the last ruins of the Roman world.

For History is not silent what we did,
Long ere we crushed to dust the Grecian name :
It was no Western to whom Bajazid
Surrendered his long heritage of fame ;
The shame of Hungary was not less sure,
Because your victor crouched before Timour.

Hard was the penalty of broken faith,
By Lladislaus paid on Varna's plain : *
For many a Knight there met unhonoured death,
When, like a god of vengeance, rose again
Old Amurath from his far home and cried,
" Now Jesus combats on Mohammed's side ! "

* A.D. 1444. A copy of the treaty, the monument of Christian perfidy, had been displayed in the front of battle ; and it is said that the Sultan, in his distress, lifting his eyes and his hands to heaven, implored the protection of the God of Truth, and called on the prophet Jesus himself, to avenge the impious mockery of his name and religion.—GIBSON, chap. lxvii.

Nor was the mission of our Master stayed,
When seated safe on this imperial throne ;
Witness the wonders wrought before Belgrade, *
The fields whose very loss none blushed to own ;
Witness St. John's proud island-chevaliers, †
Thrust from their lordship of two hundred years.

Thus did we justify the Faith by Works :
And the bright Crescent haunted Europe's eye,
Till many a Pope believed the demon Turks
Would scour the Vatican, ere he could die :
Why was our arm of conquest shortened ? Why ?
Ask him whose will is o'er us, like the sky.

The dome to heavenly wisdom ‡ consecrate
Still echoes with the Muslim's fervent prayers ;
The just successor of the Khaleefate
Still on his brow the sign of empire wears ;
We hold our wealth without reserve or fear ;
And yet we know we are but tented here.

* A.D. 1456, when defended by John Huniades.

† Knights of Rhodes.

‡ Hagia Sophia.

Millions of Christians bend beneath our rule,
And yet these realms are neither theirs nor ours,
Sultan and subject are alike the tool
Of Europe's ready guile or banded powers ;
Against the lords of continent and sea
What can one nation do, one people be ?

Therefore regardless of the moment's shame,
Of wives' disdain, and childrens' thoughtless woe,
Of Christian triumph o'er the Prophet's name,
Of Russia's smile beneath her mask of snow :
Let us return to Asia's fair domain,
Let us in truth possess the East again !

Men of the West ! Ye understand us not,
We you no more : ye take our good for ill ;
Ye scorn what we esteem man's happiest lot—
Perfect submission to creative will ;
Ye would rejoice to watch from us depart
Our ancient temperance—our peace of heart.

Let us return ! if long we linger here
Ye will destroy us, not with open swords,
Not with such arms as brave men must not fear,
But with the poison'd shafts of subtle words :
Your blank indifference for our living creed
Would make us paltry Infidels indeed.

What can Ye give us for a Faith so lost ?
For love of Duty, and delight in Prayer ?
How are we wiser that our minds are tost
By winds of knowledge on a sea of care ?
How are we better that we hardly fear
To break the laws our fathers held most dear ?

Aping your customs we have changed e'en now
The noble garb in nature's wisdom given,
And turban that, on every Muslim's brow,
Was as a crown at once for earth and heaven :—
The sword with which the sire Byzantium won
Sleeps in yon deep unwielded by the son.*

* The sword of Mahomet the Second, worn at the conquest of Constantinople, had always been religiously preserved in a mosque

Let us return ! across the fatal strait
Our Fathers' shadows welcome us once more ;
Back to the glories of the Khaleefate,
Back to the faith we loved, the dress we wore,
When in one age the world could well contain
Haroon Er-Rasheed and your Charlemagne !

untainted by the foot of the Infidel. The late Sultan put it on, the day he went to visit the large man-of-war which bears his name, when first completed : on mounting the ship's side, the sword, which was a small short one, got detached, and fell into the strait, lost irrecoverably ;—this was regarded at the time as a most unhappy omen.

THE HAREEM.

BEHIND the veil, where depth is traced
By many a complicated line,—
Behind the lattice closely laced
With filagree of choice design,—
Behind the lofty garden-wall,
Where stranger face can ne'er surprise,—
That inner world her all-in-all,
The Eastern Woman lives and dies.

Husband and children round her draw
The narrow circle where she rests ;
His will the single perfect law,
That scarce with choice her mind molests ;
Their birth and tutelage the ground
And meaning of her life on earth—
She knows not elsewhere could be found
The measure of a woman's worth.

If young and beautiful, she dwells
 An Idol in a secret shrine,
Where one high-priest alone dispels
 The solitude of charms divine :
And in his happiness she lives,
 And in his honour has her own,
And dreams not that the love she gives
 Can be too much for him alone.

Within the gay kiosk reclined,
 Above the scent of lemon groves,
Where bubbling fountains kiss the wind,
 And birds make music to their loves,—
She lives a kind of faëry life,
 In sisterhood of fruits and flowers,
Unconscious of the outer strife,
 That wears the palpitating hours.

And when maturer duties rise
 In pleasure's and in passion's place,
Her duteous loyalty supplies
 The presence of departed grace :

So hopes she, by untiring truth,
To win the bliss to share with him,
Those glories of celestial youth,
That time can never taint or dim.*

Thus in the ever-closed Hareem,
As in the open Western home,
Sheds womanhood her starry gleam
Over our being's busy foam ;
Through latitudes of varying faith
Thus trace we still her mission sure,
To lighten life, to sweeten death,
And all for others to endure.

Home of the East ! thy threshold's edge
Checks the wild foot that knows no fear,
Yet shrinks, as if from sacrilege—
When rapine comes thy precincts near :

* It is supposed to be left to the will of the husband to decide whether his wife should be united to him in a future state : but this does not imply that her happiness after death depends upon him.

Existence, whose precarious thread
Hangs on the tyrant's mood and nod,
Beneath thy roof its anxious head
Rests as within the house of God.

There, though without he feels a slave,
Compelled another's will to scan,
Another's favour forced to crave—
There is the subject still the man :
There is the form that none but he
Can touch,—the face that he alone
Of living men has right to see ;—
Not He who fills the Prophet's throne.

Then let the Moralist, who best
Honours the female heart, that blends
The deep affections of the West
With thought of life's sublimest ends,
Ne'er to the Eastern home deny
Its lesser, yet not humble praise,
To guard one pure humanity
Amid the stains of evil days.

THE MOSQUE.

A SIMPLE unpartitioned room,—
Surmounted by an ample dome,
Or, in some lands that favoured lie,
With centre open to the sky,
But roofed with archèd cloisters round,
That mark the consecrated bound,
And shade the niche to Mekkeh turned,
By which two massive lights are burned ;
With pulpit whence the sacred word
Expounded on great days is heard ;
With fountain fresh, where, ere they pray,
Men wash the soil of earth away ;
With shining minaret, thin and high,
From whose fine-trelliced balcony

Announcement of the hours of prayer
Is uttered to the silent air ;
Such is the Mosque—the holy place,
Where faithful men of every race,
Meet at their ease, and face to face.

Not that the power of God is here
More manifest, or more to fear ;
Not that the glory of his face
Is circumscribed by any space ;
But that, as men are wont to meet
In court or chamber, mart or street,
For purposes of gain or pleasure,
For friendliness or social leisure,—
So, for the greatest of all ends
To which intelligence extends,
The worship of the Lord, whose will
Created and sustains us still,
And honour of the Prophet's name,
By whom the saving message came,
Believers meet together here,
And hold these precincts very dear.

The floor is spread with matting neat,
Unstained by touch of shodden feet—
A decent and delightful seat !
Where, after due devotions paid,
And legal ordinance obeyed,
Men may in happy parlance join,
And gay with serious thought combine ;
May ask the news from lands away,
May fix the business of to-day ;
Or, with “ God willing,” at the close,
To-morrow’s hopes and deeds dispose.

Children are running in and out
With silver-sounding laugh and shout,
No more disturbed in their sweet play,
No more disturbing those that pray,
Than the poor birds, that fluttering fly
Among the rafters there on high,
Or seek at times, with grateful hop,
The corn fresh-sprinkled on the top.*

* Many of the mosques possess funds dedicated to the support of birds and other animals : one at Cairo has a large boat at the

So, lest the stranger's scornful eye
Should hurt this sacred family,—
Lest inconsiderate words should wound
Devout adorers with their sound,—
Lest careless feet should stain the floor
With dirt and dust from out the door,—
'Tis well that custom should protect
The place with prudence circumspect,
And let no unbeliever pass
The threshold of the faithful mass ;
That as each Muslim his Hareem
Guards even from a jealous dream,
So should no alien feeling scathe
This common home of public faith,
So should its very name dispel
The presence of the infidel.

Yet, though such reverence may demand
A building raised by human hand,

top filled with corn as fast as it is consumed, and another possessed an estate bequeathed to it to give food to the homeless cats of the city. Most of these funds have, however, now passed, with those of higher charities, into Mehemet Ali's own pocket.

Most honour to the men of prayer,
Whose mosque is in them everywhere !
Who, amid revel's wildest din,
In war's severest discipline,
On rolling deck, in thronged bazaar,
In stranger lands, however far,
However different in their reach
Of thought, in manners, dress, or speech,—
Will quietly their carpet spread,
To Mekkeh turn the humble head,
And, as if blind to all around,
And deaf to each distracting sound,
In ritual language God adore,
In spirit to his presence soar,
And, in the pauses of the prayer,
Rest, as if rapt in glory there !

MOHAMMEDANISM.

WHILE the high truths to man in Christ revealed
Were met by early foes,
Who oft assault by strategy concealed,
And oft in force arose ;

While Pagan fancy would not lay aside
Her pleasurable faith,
At call of one who lived in that he died,
And preached that Life was Death ;

And while philosophy with old belief
Blent fragments of the new,
Though every master held himself the chief
Discerner of the true ;

In that convulsion and distress of thought,
Th' Idea that long ago
Had ruled the Hebrew mind occasion caught
To strike a final blow.

In the fresh passions of a vigorous race
Was sown a living seed,
Strong these contending mysteries to displace
By one plain ancient creed.

Thus in a life and land, such as of old
The Patriarch name begot,
Rose a new Prophet, simple to behold,
Cast in a humble lot ;

Who in the wild requirements of his state
Let half his life go by,
And then stood up a man of faith and fate,
That could the world defy.

God and his Prophets, and the final day,
He preached, and little more,
Resting the weight of all he had to say
On what was said before.*

He bade men mark the fissureless blue sky,
The streams that spring and run,
The clouds that with regenerate life supply
The havoc of the sun :

All forms of life profuse and different,
The camel and the palm,
To them for sustenance or service sent,
And wondrous herbs of balm ;

He bade them mark how all existence comes
From one Creative will,
As well the bee that 'mid the blossoms hums,
As human pride and skill.

* Mohammed always professes to be renewing old truths, not to be revealing new ones : he seems to be always wishing to restore the patriarchal state of thought and feeling, with the addition of a distinct faith in a future life and in a day of final retribution.

How shadows of all beings, morn and even,
Before Him humbly bend,
And, willing or unwilling, earth and heaven
Work out His solemn end.

Therefore is God the Universal Power,
The Absolute, the One,—
With whom a thousand years are as an hour,
And earth as moon or sun.

And shall this God who all creation fills
His creature men permit
The puny fragments of their mortal wills
Against his might to set?

What wonderful insanity of pride !
With objects of the eye
And fanciful devices to divide
His awful monarchy.

Can vain associates* seated on His throne,
 Command the only Lord?
 What strength have they but flows from Him alone,
 Adorers or adored?

Hew down the Idols : prayer is due to Power,—
 But these are weak and frail :
 —By men and angels every living hour
 Father, Creator, hail !

So preached of God Mohammed, of himself
 He spoke in lowly words,
 As one who wanted not or power or pelf,
 Or more than God affords ; †

* The frequent recurrence of this notion evidently applies to the doctrine of the Trinity and the worship of the Virgin as much as to that of Idols ; it is singular that Mohammed considers the two as equally common to all Christians ; it has been suggested that the sect of Collyridians, who used to sacrifice cakes (*κολλυρίδες*) to St. Mary had come prominently under his notice : this is unlikely and unnecessary ; the mere title of the Mother of God was enough to excite his hostility, as that of the Son did ; and his was not the mind to make the philosophical distinction.

† I ask for no payment ; I am paid at the hand of God—the Master of the universe. Kurân, chap. xxvi. ver. 109.

As a poor bearer with the message sent
Of God's majestic will,
In his whole being resolutely bent
That mission to fulfil.

The miracles to which he oft appealed
Were Nature's, not his own,
Teaching that God was everywhere revealed—
Not in His words alone.

No Poet he, weaving capricious dreams,
To please inconstant youth,
But one who uttered, without shows and seems,
The serious facts of truth ;

And threats and promises, that line by line
Were parts to mortals given
Of that eternal Book of thought divine—
The Prototype in heaven :

Which ever and anon from that sad dawn
Of sin that Adam saw
In Pentateuch, and Gospel, and Kuràn
Enunciates Allah's law.*

In Noah, Abraham, Moses, Earth beholds
The prophet lineage run,
Down till the fulness of due time unfolds
Immaculate Mary's son.†

* The archetype or "mother" of all these sacred books, is supposed to have existed in Heaven from the beginning of things : thus the Prophet always speaks of the Kuràn as a thing completed from the very beginning : thus, too, every verse is as much the Kuràn as the whole book. This adoration of the Word has had a peculiar effect on the Arabic language,—every word in the Kuràn being declared, as a matter of faith, to be pure Arabic, even those demonstrably Persian. The copies of the Kuràn printed by order of Mahomet Ali have not yet been sanctioned by the ecclesiastical authorities : they say, "they cannot answer for the errors of the press, some of them probably intentional, Infidels being occasionally employed in the work." The copyists, it must be remembered, are a strong *interest* in the East.

† Mohammed seems to have attached so little importance to miraculous events—regarding the whole world as one incessant miracle—that his recognition of the supernatural birth of Christ does not imply any acknowledgment of his divine nature. It still remains a subject of inquiry, from what sources he derived his notions of the theory of Christianity, or the person of its author.

Whence to Arabia's free unlettered child
The great commission past,—
Mohammed, the Apostle of the Wild,
The purest and the last.

Thus stood he wholly in reflected light,
Rejecting other claim
To power or honour than attends of right
The Apostolic name.

Not, probably, from books : for if his assertion (chap. xxix. v. 47) that he could neither read nor write had not been correct, it could have been disproved by many persons present, who had known him from his youth ; and Toland's theory of his instruction by the apocryphal gospel of Barnabas has been put an end to by the discovery of the forgery of that work, written with the very intent of exciting this notion, long after Mohammed's era, in Italy or Spain. The Syrian monk, Sergius, is a rather obscure personage : Mohammed only knew him in his early days, and he is hardly likely to have filled the mind of a heathen boy with strange legends and perverted facts. The Christianity of the Kuràn is, in all probability, the Arabian tradition of that time, formed out of the recollections of the doctrine which spread very early into Arabia, but did not meet with much success there, and the relations of the Nestorian fugitives, who would not scruple to attribute many corruptions to the orthodox body. The Infancy, and other apocryphal gospels, are derived from a similar source, and hence their frequent coincidence with Mohammedan notions.

Yet louder still he preached the day that comes
Unhastened, undelayed,
Fixed to consign to their eternal homes
All men that God has made :

The day when children shall grow gray with fear,
And, like a ball of sand,
God shall take up this our terrestrial sphere,
In the hollow of his hand ;

When without intercessor, friend, or kin,
Each man shall stand alone,*
Before his judge, and, once for ever, win
A prison or a throne.

The Unbeliever in his agony
Shall seek in whom to trust,
And when his idols help him not, shall cry
“ O God ! that I were dust ! ”

* “ All shall appear before him on the day of resurrection, each *alone*.” Chap. xix. v. 95.

Before the Faithful, as their troops arise,
A glorious light shall play,
And angels herald them to Paradise,
To bliss without decay ;

Gardens of green, that pales not in the sun,
And ever-budding flowers;
Rivers that cool in brightest noon-day run,
Nor need the shade of bowers ;

Seats of high honour and supreme repose,
To which the laden trees
Bend at desire, and every hour disclose
Fresh tastes and fragrances ;

Deep cups of wine that bring no after-pain
By angel-children plied,
And love without satiety or stain
For bridegroom or for bride.*

* A great deal has been said about the sensuality of the Mohammedan Paradise, but without sufficient regard to the habits of the East

While yet a purer essence of delight
Awaits the bolder few,
That plunge their being in the Infinite,
And rise to life anew.*

Such was the guise of Truth that on its front
The new religion wore,
And in new words men followed, as is wont,
Precepts they scorn'd before.

and the character of the religion. The virtue of chastity is an invention of Christianity, at least as a practice of ordinary life. Egypt and Greece had their priestesses devoted to celibacy—Rome her Vestals; and most forms of natural religion recognise bodily purity as an attribute of high spiritual distinction: but Mohammedanism is essentially popular—it admits no notion of a mediating or privileged priesthood—it places man the creature on the one side, and God the Creator on the other, absolutely and eternally separate; and thus Man uses his instincts as freely and as innocently as any other part of creation. This evil is, in fact, a plain deduction from a system of pure Theism. Man is not elevated by salvation,—he is only saved and rewarded.

* Even Oriental mysticism distinguishes itself from Christian by the predominance of the sensual character: it is the rapture of the soul, the ecstatic interfusion of pleasure and pain, the yearning towards the absorption of self in the Infinite, which is at the heart of the spiritual religion of the East, while with us there is much more sentiment, and a variety according to the character of the individual, unknown to Oriental Pantheism.

And the Faith rose from families to tribes,
From tribes to nations rose,
And open enmities and ribald gibes
Grew feeble to oppose.

“Resigned to God”*—this name the Faithful bore—
This simple, noble name;
And reckoned life a thing of little store,
A transitory game.

Thus was Endurance on the banner writ
That led the Muslim forth,
And wonder not that they who follow it
Should conquer half the earth.

What might the men not do, who thus could know
No fear and fear no loss?
One only thing—they could not overthrow
The kingdom of the Cross.

* The meaning of the word “Muslim :”—“El Islam” also signifies “the resigning.”

And this, because it held an element
Beyond their spirits' range,
A Truth for which the faith they represent
Had nothing to exchange.

One God the Arabian Prophet preached to man,
One God the Orient still
Adores through many a realm of mighty span,
A God of Power and Will :—

A God that shrouded in His lonely light
Rests utterly apart
From all the vast Creations of His might,
From Nature, Man, and Art :—

A Being in whose solitary hand
All other beings weigh
No more than in the potter's reckoning stand
The workings of his clay :—

A Power that at its pleasure will create,
To save or to destroy ;
And to eternal pain predestinate,
As to eternal joy :— *

An unconditioned, irrespective, will,
Demanding simple awe,
Beyond all principles of good or ill,
Above idea of law.

No doctrine here of perfect Love divine,
To which the bounds belong
Only of that unalterable line
Disparting right from wrong :—

* Mohammed carries out the doctrine of predestination with a merciless logic—"Would you force men to become believers? How can a soul believe without the will of God?" Chap. x. v. 99. "There shall be a great number of those that are saved among the ancient peoples, but few among those of modern times." Chap. lvi. v. 13. The eternity of hell does not seem to be doubted.

A love, that, while it must not regulate
The issues of free-will,
By its own sacrifice can expiate
The penalties of ill.

No message here of man redeemed from sin,
Of fallen nature raised,
By inward strife and moral discipline,
Higher than e'er debased,—

Of the immense parental heart that yearns
From highest heaven to meet
The poorest wandering spirit that returns
To its Creator's feet.

No Prophet here by common essence bound
At once to God and man,
Author Himself and part of the profound
And providential plan :

Himself the ensample of unuttered worth,
Himself the living sign,
How by God's grace the fallen sons of earth
May be once more divine.

—Thus in the faiths old Heathendom that shook
Were different powers of strife ;
Mohammed's truth lay in a holy Book,
Christ's in a sacred Life.

So, while the world rolls on from change to change,
And realms of thought expand,
The Letter stands without expanse or range,
Stiff as a dead man's hand ;

While, as the life-blood fills the growing form,
The Spirit Christ has shed
Flows through the ripening ages fresh and warm,
More felt than heard or read.

And therefore, though ancestral sympathies,
And closest ties of race,
May guard Mohammed's precept and decrees,
Through many a tract of space,

Yet in the end the tight-drawn line must break,
The sapless tree must fall,
Nor let the form one time did well to take
Be tyrant over all.

The tide of things rolls forward, surge on surge.
Bringing the blessed hour,
When in Himself the God of Love shall merge
The God of Will and Power.

THE SONG OF THE WAHABEES.

THESE Protestants of Mohammedanism owe their origin to the Sheykh Mohammed Ibn-Abd-El-Wahhab, who founded or incorporated them into a religion and political sect in 1745. They professed to restore Islam to its primitive purity, and to establish an ascetic morality throughout its followers. Like some other religious Reformers, they committed great devastation in places reputed holy, and gratified by the same acts their hatred of superstition and their love of gain. They forbade all luxury in dress and habits of life, and even interdicted the use of the pipe—almost a necessary of existence to the Oriental. The attention of the Porte was not long ago directed to their increasing power in Arabia and the molestations they offered to the pilgrims to the Holy Cities; and the present Pasha of Egypt, after many losses and repulses, succeeded in completely subduing them. Individuals of these tenets are still occasionally to be met with, but it is very difficult to draw from them any information or acknowledgment.

WE will not that the truth of God by prophets brought
to earth

Shall be o'erlaid by dreams and thoughts of none or
little worth ;

We will not that the noblest Man, that ever lived and died,
Should be for canting, cozening, Saints * in reverence
set aside.

* The whole notion of Hagiology is totally at variance with the original idea of Islam : nevertheless there is no city without its mosque,

While God was uttering through his lips, and writing
through his pen,
Mohammed took his lot with us, a man with other men;
And thus in our due love to him, and awe for God alone,
We bless his memory as the chest that holds the precious stone.

So, though 'tis well that where entombed, his holy body
lies,
Praises and prayers from faithful crowds to Allah's name
should rise.

The best of Mosques is still the tent where earnest
Muslims meet,
The best of Minarets is the rock that desert tempests
beat.

We all have Mekkeh in our hearts, who speak and act
the truth ; *

sanctified by the relics of the Prophet or his family, and hardly a district without the tomb of its local Saint. Part of the dress of the Prophet is yearly soaked in a large quantity of water, which is bottled into small vials, and sent to all the great dignitaries of the Empire. So vain have been the Prophet's efforts to establish a practical Monotheism.

* The Wahabees allowed a certain veneration for Mekkeh, as Protestantism permits for Jerusalem, but discouraged pilgrimages generally.

We all are Saints who read the Book and worship from
our youth.

Men are no happier than they were for all El-Azhar's lore,*
And if our Faith wins Paradise, can knowledge win us
more?

We will not that the gifts of God, so good when used
aright,

Should leave their wholesome natural ends and turn to
His despite ;

That men should change the sweetest flowers to bitter
poison weeds :

The Book has said that "every one is hostage for his
deeds."†

Man should be man ; the world is his to conquer and
command,

No pipe or downy bed for him, but horse and sword in
hand ;

Let they who will consume their lives in joys of vicious
ease,—

The Prophet's word will scarce prevail with Preachers
such as these.

* The great college at Cairo, the Oxford of Arabia.

† Kuràn, chap. lii. v. 21.

Let women love Damascus silk, give us Damascus blades,

The shawls of rich Cashmere look best on our Circasian maids ;

We wear the homely woollen woof, such as Mohammed wore,

Nor steal from herbs the drunken dreams that he with wine forswore.

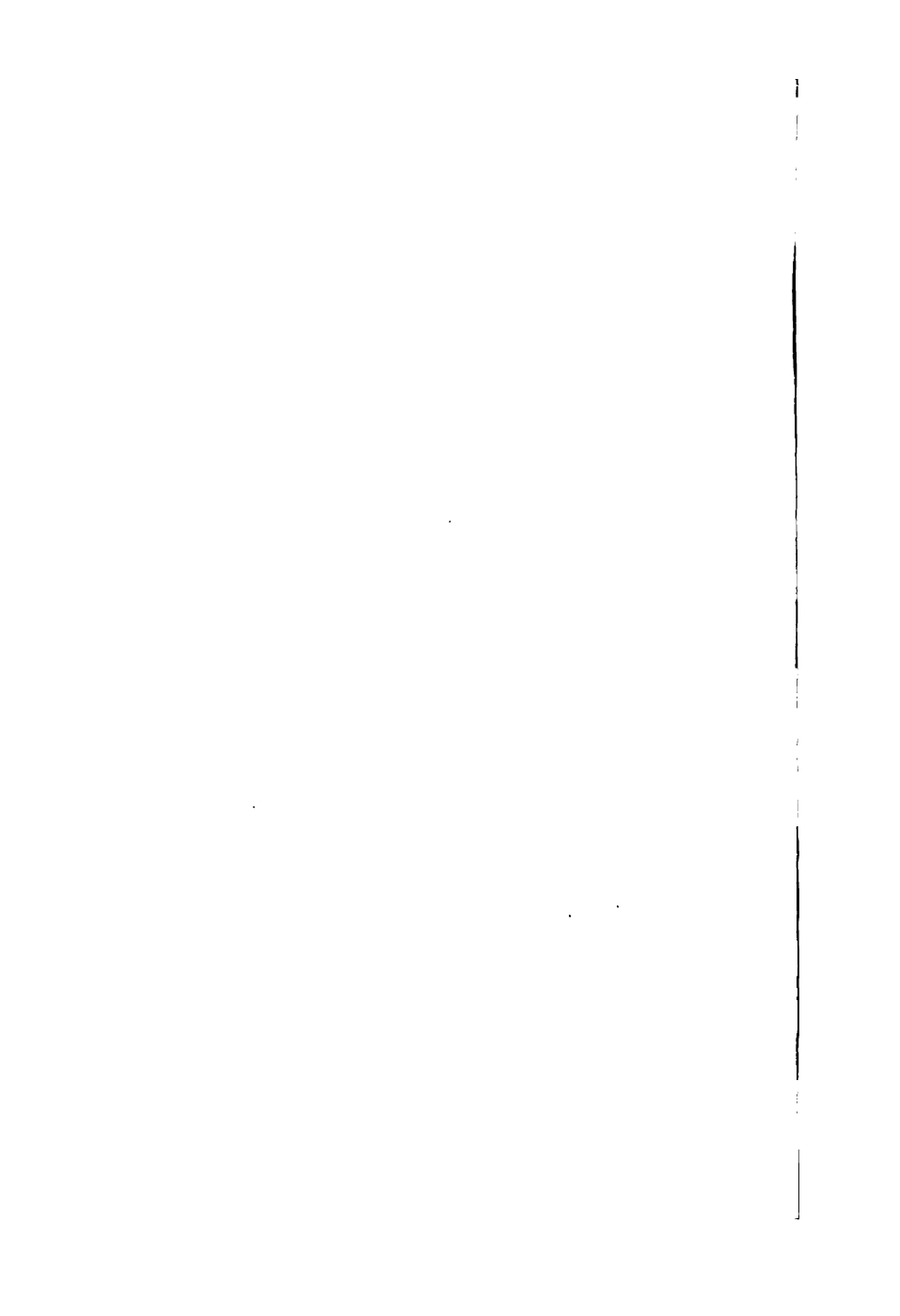
We know that time is worse than lost, which is not used for gain,

For Life is not a jest, and God will not create in vain,—

And thus we will not rest while earth has idols still to fall ;

Till Islam is indeed Islam, and Allah God of all !

ARABIAN LEGENDS.



I.

THE PRIDE OF NIMROD.

“THOU art King of all the nations,—

They are thine to take or give,—

We are but thy will's creations,—

In thy breath we die or live.”

So the servile courtiers chanted,

But the tyrant's heart replied

That some stronger food was wanted

To content his swollen pride.

Now, behold, the myriads gather

Round him,—work as he may bid,

To invade God's realm of æther

By the Babel pyramid :

God the pitiful intrusion
Checks not by his lightning hand,
But imposing mad confusion
Frustrates every proud command.

Allah then in arms defying,*
See the tyrant's golden car,
With four harnessed eagles, flying
Upward, through the air afar :
Now he glows in rage delighted,
Thinks he grasps Jehovah's throne,
But that instant falls benighted
On a desert rock alone.

Hear, Believers ! hear with wonder
How, at last, God's vengeance came ;
Not in tempest, not in thunder,
Not in pestilence or flame :

* The Kurân makes Pharaoh also build a huge tower to scale heaven with ; Pharaoh ascended it when completed, and having thrown a javelin upwards, which fell back again stained with blood, boasted he had killed the God of Moses ; but Gabriel, at one brush of his wing, demolished the tower, which fell, crushing a million of men.

One of Nature's meanest features,
Hardly to your vision clear,
Least of tiny insect creatures,
Crept into the Tyrant's ear.

There its subtle life it nested
In the tissues of his brain,
And the anguish never rested,
And his being turned to pain :
Thus four hundred years tormented,
Nature's God he learnt to know,
Yet his pride was unrepented,
And he sunk to endless woe !

II.

ABRAHAM AND HIS GODS.

ABRAHAM is the great Patriarch of Arabia ; he is declared by Mohammed to be neither a Jew nor a Christian, but a Muslim and the friend of God. The great idol of red agate, with a golden hand holding seven divining arrows, which Mohammed destroyed in the Kaabeh, after his capture of Mekkeh, is supposed to have been a representation of Abraham. The Black Stone set in silver, which the Prophet left there, and which has remained an object of idolatrous homage, is said to be one of the precious stones of Paradise, and to have been brought by the angel Gabriel to Abraham, when he was rebuilding the Kaabeh. The Books of Abraham are spoken of with those of Moses, chap. lxxxvii. v. 19 ; the Kuràn is full of him : Mohammed seems, whether intentionally or not, to have fused his character into his own ; he makes Abraham speak as himself, and he himself speaks in the person of the Patriarch. The following story expresses either the process of Abraham's reasoning with himself, or was used, by way of argument, to convince the idolaters among whom he lived. Josephus (lib. i. cap. 8.) writes of Abraham, "that he was the first that ventured to publish this notion, that there was but one God, the Creator of the Universe, and that, as to other gods, if they contributed anything to the happiness of man, each of them afford it only according to his appointment, and not by their own power : this his opinion was derived from the irregular phenomena that were visible both at land and sea, as well as those that happen to the sun and moon, and all the heavenly bodies."

BENEATH the full-eyed Syrian moon,
The Patriarch, lost in reverence, raised
His consecrated head, and soon
He knelt, and worshipped while he gazed :
“ Surely that glorious Orb on high
Must be the Lord of earth and sky ! ”

Slowly toward its central throne
The glory rose, yet paused not there,
But seemed by influence not its own
Drawn downward through the western air,
Until it wholly sunk away,
And the soft Stars had all the sway.

Then to that hierarchy of light,
With face upturned the sage remained,—
“ At least Ye stand for ever bright,—
Your power has never waxed or waned ! ”
Even while he spoke, their work was done,
Drowned in the overflowing Sun.

Eastward he bent his eager eyes—

“Creatures of Night! false Gods and frail!

Take not the worship of the wise,

There is the Deity we hail;

Fountain of light, and warmth, and love,

He only bears our hearts above.”

Yet was that One—that radiant One,

Who seemed so absolute a King,

Only ordained his round to run,

And pass like each created thing;

He rested not in noonday prime,

But fell beneath the strength of time.

Then like one labouring without hope

To bring his toil to fruitful end,

And powerless to discern the scope

Whereto his aspirations tend,

Still Abraham prayed by night and day—

“God! teach me to what God to pray!”

Nor long in vain; an inward Light
Arose to which the Sun is pale,
The knowledge of the Infinite,
The sense of Truth that must prevail ;—
The presence of the only Lord
By angels and by men adored.

III.

MOSES ON MOUNT SINAI.

There is a Hebrew tradition that the Israelites asked two things of God,—to hear his voice and see his glory : these were granted them, and in consequence they fell down dead : but the Law (which is here a personality) addressed God, saying, “ Shall a king give his daughter in marriage and destroy his own household ? Thou hast given me to the world which rejoices in me, and shall the Israelites, thy children, perish ? ” Upon this, the dead were restored to life ; for “ the law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul.” Ps. xix. 7. The Kurân limits the vision of God to Moses. The leading events of that Prophet’s life are there given with little variation from the Jewish scriptures : the events connected with the departure of the Jews from Egypt have, of course, afforded much scope to traditions of the marvellous. One miracle ascribed to him, as being exhibited for the terror of Pharoah, is very picturesque, viz., that he was a most swarthy man, but when he placed his hand in his bosom, and drew it forth again, it became extremely white and splendid, surpassing the brightness of the sun.

UP a rough peak, that toward the stormy sky
From Sinai’s sandy ridges rose aloft,
Osarsiph, priest of Hieropolis,
Now Moses named, ascended reverently
To meet and hear the bidding of the Lord.

But, though he knew that all his ancient lore
Traditionary from the birth of Time,
And all that power which waited on his hand,
Even from the day his just instinctive wrath
Had smote th' Egyptian ravisher,* and all
The wisdom of his calm and ordered mind
Were nothing in the presence of his God ;
Yet was there left a certain seed of pride,
Vague consciousness of some self-centred strength,
That made him cry, "Why, Lord, com'st thou to me,
Only a voice, a motion of the air,
A thing invisible, impalpable,
Leaving a void, an unreality,
Within my heart ? I would, with every sense,
Know thou wert there—I would be all in Thee !
Let me at least behold Thee as Thou art ;
Disperse this corporal darkness by thy light ;
Hallow my vision by thy glorious form,
So that my sense be blest for evermore !"

* Not just according to the Kuràn, which makes Moses repent of it. Chap. xxvi. v. 19.

Thus spoke the Prophet, and the Voice replied,
As in low thunders over distant seas :—

“Beneath the height to which thy feet have striven,
A hollow trench divides the cliffs of sand,
Widen'd by rains and deepened every year.
Gaze straight across it, for there opposite
To where thou standest, I will place myself,
And then, if such remain thy fixed desire,
I will descend to side by side with thee.”

So Moses gazed across the rocky vale ;
And the air darkened, and a lordly bird
Poised in the midst of its long-journeying flight,
And touched his feet with limp and fluttering wings
And all the air around, above, below,
Was metamorphosed into sound—such sound,
That separate tones were undistinguishable,
And Moses fell upon his face, as dead.
Yet life and consciousness of life returned ;
And, when he raised his head, he saw no more
The deep ravine and mountain opposite,
But one large level of distracted rocks,
With the wide desert quaking all around.

Then Moses fell upon his face again,
And prayed—"O ! pardon the presumptuous thought,
That I could look upon thy face and live :
Wonder of wonders ! that mine ear has heard
Thy voice unpalsied, and let such great grace
Excuse the audacious blindness that o'erleaps
Nature's just bounds and thy discerning will !"

IV.

SOLOMON AND THE ANTS.

Solomon is the Hero of Wisdom all over the East : but wisdom there must be manifested by power : he is therefore the great Magician, the ruler of all the spirits of Creation, and to whom all inferior creatures do homage. The Targum to the Book of Esther, i. 2, relates : " that Demons of the most different orders, and all evil Spirits, were submitted to his will." The 8th verse of the 2nd chapter of Ecclesiastes has been interpreted to have a similar meaning. One of the singular uses to which he applied his power, according to the Mohammedan commentators, was to get the demons to make a depilatory to remove the hair from the legs of the Queen of Seba before he married her. The following story from the Kuràn is evidently connected with the mention of the wonderful instincts of the ant, in Proverbs, vi. 6, 7, 8.

OF all the Kings of fallen earth,
The sun has never shone
On one to match in power and worth
With ancient Solomon.

Master of Genii and of Men,
He ruled o'er sea and land ;
Nor bird in nest, nor beast in den,
Was safe from his command.

So past he, gloriously arrayed,
One morning to review
The creatures God on earth has made,
And give Him homage due.

Well busied in a valley near,
A troop of Ants perceived
The coming pomp—and struck with fear
Death close at hand believed.

They cried : “ What care the Kings and Priests
That here in splendour meet,
What care the Genii, birds, or beasts,
For us beneath their feet ?

For what are we to them, and who
Shall check their mighty way ?
Fly to your inmost homes or rue
The glory of to-day."

The son of David's wondrous ear
No haughty mood beguiled ;
He, bent the Ant's small voice to hear,
Beneficently smiled ;

And prayed : " Oh God ! the great, the good,
Of kings Almighty King !
Preserve my progress free from blood,
Or hurt to living thing.

" Comfort these humble creatures' fear ;
Let all thy servants know,
That I thy servant, too, am here,
Thy power, not mine, to show.

That, 'mid the tumult and the tread
Of myriads, I will guard
Secure from hurt each little head,
As thou wilt me reward."

And thus the Ants that marvellous scene
Beheld, as glad a throng,
As if their tiny forms had been
The strongest of the strong.

FALLING STARS.

THE angels on th' eternal thrones
 In ecstacies of song conspire,
 And mingle their seraphic tones
 With words of wisdom, words of fire ;
 Discourse so subtle and so sweet
 That should it strike on human ear,
 That soul must leave its base retreat,
 Attracted to a loftier sphere.

So the sad Spirits, whom the will
 Of God exiles to outer pain,
 Yearning in their dark bosoms still
 For all their pride might most disdain,

Round the serene celestial halls
 Hover in agonised suspense,
To catch the slightest sound that falls,
 The faintest breeze that murmurs thence.

But holy instinct strikes a sting
 Into each pure angelic breast,
The moment any sinful thing
 Approaches its religious rest ;
And when their meteor darts are hurled
 Th' audacious listeners to surprise,
'Tis said by mortals in their world,
 That Stars are falling in the Skies.

VI.

THE INFANCY OF MOHAMMED.

THIS legend does not seem to me to be orthodox, but rather to be a later invention arising from a desire to assimilate the nature of Mohammed to that of Christ. The humility of Mohammed in all that concerns his personality is conspicuous throughout the Kuràn. "I do not say unto you, that in my possession are the treasures of God, nor that I know what is unseen; nor do I say unto you, Verily I am an angel,—I only follow what is revealed to me." Chap. vi. v. 50. "Mohammed is nought but an Apostle: other Apostles have passed away before him." Chap. iii. v. 138. Nor does Mohammed even attribute to himself any specialty of nature such as he gives to Christ, whom he declares to have been born of a Virgin by the Spirit of God. "She said, O my Lord, how shall I have a son, when a man hath not touched me? He answered—Thus. God will create what he pleaseth. When he determineth a thing—he only saith unto it, Be, and it is."

AN Arab nurse, that held in arms a sleeping Arab child,
Had wandered from the parents' tents some way into the
wild.

She knew that all was friendly round, she had no cause
to fear,

Although the rocks strange figures made and night was
threatening near.

Yet something kin to dread she felt, when sudden met
her sight

Two forms of noble maintenance and beautifully bright.

Their robes were dipt in sunset hues—their faces shone
on high,

As Sirius or Canopus shine in purest summer sky.

Straight up to her without a word they walked, yet in
their gaze

Was greeting, that with subtle charm might temper her
amaze.

One, with a mother's gentleness, then took the slumber-
ing child

That breathed as in a happy dream, and delicately smiled :

Passed a gold knife across its breast, that opened without
pain,

Took out its little beating Heart—all pure but one black
stain.

Amid the ruddy founts of life in foul stagnation lay

That thick black stain like cancerous ill that eats the
flesh away.

The other Form then placed the heart on his white open
hand,

And poured on it a magic flood, no evil could withstand :

And by degrees the deep disease beneath the wondrous
cure

Vanished, and that one mortal Heart became entirely
pure.

With earnest care they laid it back within the infant's
breast,

Closed up the gaping wound, and gave the blessing of
the blest :

Imprinting each a burning kiss upon its even brow,
And placed it in the nurse's arms, and passed she
knew not how.

Thus was Mohammed's fresh-born Heart made clean
from Adam's sin,

Thus in the Prophet's life did God his work of grace
begin.

VII.

MOHAMMED AND THE MISER.

THERE was wailing in the village—not the woe of hireling
tears,

There was sorrow all around it—not the grief of servile
fears,

Though the good Abdallah dying, to his son's especial
care

Had bequeathed his needy neighbours, making him his
virtue's heir.

But in this our earthly being virtue will not follow blood,
Good will often spring from evil, evil often rise from
good ;

So th' ensample of his father, and the trust to him con-
signed.

Could not change the rebel nature, could not raise the
niggard mind.

'Twas the season when the date-trees, cultured in their
seemly plan,
Yield their sweet and wholesome burden into the glad
lap of man ;
Then it was Abdallah's custom to collect the poor around,
To up-glean the casual fruitage, freely scattered on the
ground.

But that year about the date grove palisades were
planted strong,
Watchers placed to guard the entrance, watchers all the
wall along ;
And the Lord announced his harvest on the morrow
should begin,
Swearing he would slay the peasant that should creep
the pale within.

Passing near, the Prophet wondered at the loud lament
he heard,
And he proffered them his counsel, and he soothed them
with his word,
And he bade them trust in Allah, Father of the rich and
poor,
One who wills not that his children pine before their
brother's door.

Thundering from the sandy mountains all that night the
tempest came,
All that night the veil of water fell before the flashing
flame,
And when dawn the Master summoned to review his
promised gain,
Not the date-fruit, but the date-trees, strewed the
desolated plain.

VIII.

MOHAMMED AND THE BLIND ABDALLAH.

REFERRED to in chap. 80 of the Kuràn. Abdallah Ebn Omm Maktoum seems to have been a man of no rank or importance, but was treated with great respect by the Prophet ever after this adventure. It is interesting that Mohammed should make his own faults and the divine reproofs he received a matter of revelation, and a stronger proof of his sincerity and earnestness could hardly be given.

THE blind Abdallah sought the tent
Where, 'mid the eager listening croud,
Mohammed gave his wisdom vent,
And, entering fast, he cried aloud—
“O Father, full of love and ruth !
My soul and body both are blind ;
Pour on me then some rays of truth
From thine illuminated mind.”

Perchance the Prophet heard him not,
Or busied well, seemed not to hear,

Or, interrupted, then forgot

How all mankind to God are dear :

Disputing with the great and strong,

He frowned in momentary pride,

While through the jeering outer throng

Th' unnoticed suppliant crept aside.

But, in the calm of that midnight,

The Voice that seldom kept aloof

From his blest pillow spoke the right,

And uttered words of stern reproof :—

“ How dost thou know that poor man's soul

Did not on thy regard depend ?

The rich and proud thy moods controul ;—

I meant thee for the mourner's friend.”

Deep in the Prophet's contrite heart

The holy reprimand remained,

And blind Abdallah for his part

Kindness and reverence thence obtained :

Twice, after years of sacred strife,

Within Medeenah's walls he ruled,

The man through whom Mohammed's life
Into its perfect grace was schooled.

And, from the warning of that night,
No one, however humble, past
Without salute the Prophet's sight,
Or felt his hand not held the last :
And every one was free to hear
His high discourse, and in his breast
Unburden theirs without a fear
Of troubling his majestic rest.

Thus too, when Muslim Muslim meets,
Though new the face and strange the road,
His "Peace be on you" sweetly greets
The ear, and lightens many a load :
Proclaiming that in Allah's plan
True men of every rank and race
Form but one family of man,
One Paradise their resting-place.*

* Salutation in the East seems almost a religious ordinance,
and good manners part of the duty of a good Muslim.

IX.

MOHAMMED AND THE ASSASSIN.

“ LEAVE me, my followers, leave me ;
The best-loved voices grieve me
When falls the weary day :
My heart to God is yearning,
My soul to God returning :
Leave me alone to pray.”

So had the Prophet spoken :
The silence was unbroken ;
While on a tree close by
He hung his arms victorious,
And raised his forehead glorious
As glows the western sky.

Fast as the sun descended,
Further the Prophet wended
His course behind the hill ;
Where, at his motives prying,
An Arab foe was lying,
Hid by a sand-heap, still.

One of a hateful tribe,
Treating with scorn and gibe
God and the Prophet's name :
Creatures of evil lust,
Base as the desert dust,
Proud of their very shame !

With upraised sword behind him,
Burning to slay or bind him,
Stealthy the traitor trod ;
He cried, " At last I brave thee !
Whom hast thou now to save thee ? "
" God," said the Prophet, " God ! "

Guardian of Allah's choice,
Gabriel had heard that voice—
Had seen the felon's brand ;
Swift from his hand he tore it,
Swift as an arrow bore it
Into the Prophet's hand.

O vain design, and senseless,
To find the man defenceless
Whom God loves like a son !
He cried, " Who now shall save thee ?
Which of the friends God gave thee ? "
" None," said the Arab, " none ! "

" Yes," said the Prophet, " One—
Evil the deed now done—
Still thou hast found a friend :
Only believe and bow
To Him who has saved thee now,
Whose mercy knows no end."

EASTERN THOUGHTS.

I.

THE THINKER AND THE POET.

SUNSHINE often falls refulgent
After all the corn is in ;
Often Allah grants indulgent
Pleasure that may guard from sin :
Hence your wives may number four ;
Though he best consults his reason,
Best secures his house from treason,
Who takes one and wants no more.

Nor less well the man once gifted
With one high and holy Thought,
Will not let his mind be shifted,
But adores it, as he ought ;

Well for him whose spirit's youth
Rests as a contented lover,
Nor can other charms discover
Than in his absorbing Truth !

But the heaven-enfranchised Poet
Must have no exclusive home,
He must feel, and freely show it,—
Phantasy is made to roam :
He must give his passions range,
He must serve no single duty,
But from Beauty pass to Beauty,
Constant to a constant change.

With all races, of all ages,
He must people his Hareem ;
He must search the tents of sages,
He must scour the vales of dream :
Ever adding to his store,
From new cities, from new nations,
He must rise to new creations,
And, unsated, ask for more.

In the manifold, the various,
He delights, as Nature's child,—
Grasps at joys the most precarious,
Rides on hopes, however wild !
Though his heart at times perceives
One enduring Love hereafter,
Glimmering through his tears and laughter,
Like the sun through autumn leaves.

II.

THE EASTERN EPICUREAN.

You are moaning, "Life is waning,"
You are droning, "Flesh is weak :"
Tell me too, what I am gaining
While I listen, while you speak.

If you say the rose is blooming,
But the blast will soon destroy it,
Do so, not to set me glooming,
But to make me best enjoy it.

Calm the heart's insatiate yearning
Towards the distant, the unknown :
Only do so, without turning
Men to beasts, or flesh to stone.

Cry not loud, "The world is mad !
"Lord ! how long shall folly rule ?"
If you 've nothing but the sad
To replace the jovial fool.

Sorrow is its own clear preacher,—
Death is still on Nature's tongue ;—
Life and joy require the teacher,
Honour Youth and keep it young.

Even you, ascetics, rightly,
Should appreciate Love and Joy ;—
For what you regard so lightly
Where's the merit to destroy ?

III.

“ To endure and to pardon is the wisdom of life.

Kuràn 42, v. 41.

FATHER ! if we may well endure
The ill that with our lives begins,
May 'st Thou, to whom all things are pure,
Endure our follies and our sins !

Brothers ! if we return you good
For evil thought or malice done,
Doubt not, that in our hearts a blood
As hot as in your own may run.

IV.

PHYSICAL AND MORAL BLINDNESS.

THE habits here alluded to are familiar to every traveller in those parts of the East where a large portion of the population are subject to ophthalmia and other diseases of the eyes, brought on by dirt and carelessness. In Egypt the number is much increased by those who have blinded themselves, or been blinded by their parents, to avoid the conscription.

THE child whose eyes were never blest
With heavenly light, or lost it soon,
About another's neck will rest
Its arm, and walk like you at noon ;
The blind old man will place his palm
Upon a child's fresh-blooming head,
And follow through the croud in calm
That infantine and trusty tread.

We, too, that in our spirits' dark
Traverse a wild and weary way,

May in these sweet resources mark
A lesson, and be safe as they :
Resting, when young, in happy faith
On fair affection's daily bond,
And afterwards resigned to death,
Feeling the childly life beyond.

V.

DISCORDANT ELEMENTS.

IN the sight of God all-seeing,
Once a handful of loose foam
Played upon the sea of being,
Like a child about its home :
In his smile it shone delighted,
Danced beneath his swaying hand,
But at last was cast benighted
On the cold and alien land.

Can it wait till waves returning
Bear it to its parent breast ?
Can it bear the noontide's burning,
Dwelling Earth's contented guest ?

Oh ! no,—it will filter slowly
Through the hard ungenial shore,
Till each particle be wholly
In the deep absorbed once more.

VI.

THE TWO THEOLOGIES.

THE MYSTIC SPEAKS.

IT must be that the light divine
That on your soul is pleased to shine
Is other than what falls on mine :

For you can fix and formalize
The Power on which you raise your eyes,
And trace him in his palace-skies ;

You can perceive and almost touch
His attributes as such and such,
Almost familiar overmuch.

You can his thoughts and ends display,
In fair historical array,
From Adam to the judgment-day.

You can adjust to time and place
The sweet effusions of his grace,
And feel yourself before his face.

You walk as in some summer night,
With moon or stars serenely bright,
On which you gaze—at ease—upright.

But I am like a flower sun-bent,
Exhaling all its life and scent
Beneath the heat omnipotent.

I have not comforts such as you,—
I rather suffer good than do,—
Yet God is my Deliverer too.

I cannot think Him here or there—
I think Him ever everywhere—
Unfading light, unstified air.

I lay a piteous mortal thing,—
Yet shadowed by his spirit's wing,
A deathless life could in me spring :

And thence I am, and still must be ;
What matters whether I or He ?—
Little was there to love in me.

I know no beauty, bliss, or worth,
In that which we call Life on earth,
That we should mourn its loss or dearth :

That we should sorrow for its sake,
If God will the imperfect take
Unto Himself, and perfect make.

O Lord ! our separate lives destroy !
Merge in thy gold our souls' alloy,—
Pain is our own, and Thou art Joy !

VII.

LOSS AND GAIN.

MYRIAD Roses, unregretted, perish in their vernal bloom,
That the essence of their sweetness *once* your Beauty
may perfume.

Myriad Veins of richest life-blood empty forth their
priceless worth,
To exalt *one* Will imperial over spacious realms of earth.

Myriad Hearts are pained and broken that *one* Poet may
be taught
To discern the shapes of passion and describe them as
he ought.

Myriad Minds of heavenly temper pass as passes moon
or star,
That *one* philosophic Spirit may ascend the solar car.

Sacrifice and Self-devotion hallow earth and fill the skies,
And the meanest Life is sacred whence the highest may
arise.

VIII.

THE MOTH.

PARTED from th' eternal presence,
Into life the Soul is born,
In its fragmentary essence
Left unwittingly forlorn.

In the shrubbery's scented shadows
First the insect tries its wings,
In the evening's misty meadows
It pursues the faëry rings.

Where the trelliced roses clamber,
And the jasmine peeps between,
Looks the gardener's lowly chamber
On the garden—on the green.

Through the sultry veil of vapour,
Like a nearer nether star,
Shines the solitary taper,
Seen and known by friend afar.

Then the Moth, by strange attraction,
Leaves the garden, leaves the field,
Cannot rest in sweet inaction,
Cannot taste what earth can yield.

As the lov'd one to the lover,
As a treasure, once your own,
That you might some way recover,
Seems to him that fiery cone.

Round he whirls with pleasure tingling—
Shrinks aghast—returns again—
Ever wildly intermingling
Deep delight and burning pain.

Highest nature wills the capture,
 “Light to light” th’ instinct cries,
And, in agonising rapture,
 Falls the Moth, and bravely dies !

Think not what thou art, Believer ;
 Think but what thou may’st become ;
For the World is thy deceiver,
 And the Light thy only home !

IX.

THE SAYINGS OF RABIA.

RABIA was a holy woman, who lived in the second century of the Hegira. Her sayings and thoughts are collected by many devotional Arabic writers : they are a remarkable development of a purely Christian mystical spirit so early in the history of Islam ; the pantheistic mysticism of Sufism soon followed, and obtained a signal victory over the bare positive theism of the Prophet, clothing the heartless doctrine with a radiant vesture of imagination.

I.

A PIOUS friend one day of Rabia asked,
How she had learnt the truth of Allah wholly ?
By what instructions was her memory tasked—
How was her heart estranged from this world's folly ?

She answered—"Thou, who knowest God in parts,
Thy spirit's moods and processes can tell ;
I only know that in my heart of hearts
I have despised myself and loved Him well."

II

II.

Some evil upon Rabia fell,
And one who loved and knew her well
Murmured that God with pain undue
Should strike a child so fond and true :
But she replied—" Believe and trust
That all I suffer is most just ;
I had in contemplation striven
To realise the joys of heaven ;
I had extended fancy's flights
Through all that region of delights,—
Had counted, till the numbers failed,
The pleasures on the blest entailed,—
Had sounded the ecstatic rest
I should enjoy on Allah's breast ;
And for those thoughts I now atone
That were of something of my own,
And were not thoughts of Him alone."

III.

When Rabia unto Mekkeh came,
She stood awhile apart—alone,

Nor joined the croud with hearts on flame
Collected round the sacred stone.

She, like the rest, with toil had crossed
The waves of water, rock, and sand,
And now, as one long tempest-tossed,
Beheld the Kaabeh's promised land.

Yet in her eyes no transport glistened ;
She seemed with shame and sorrow bowed ;
The shouts of prayer she hardly listened,
But beat her heart and cried aloud :—

“ O heart ! weak follower of the weak,
That thou should'st traverse land and sea,
In this far place that God to seek
Who long ago had come to thee ! ”

IV.

Round holy Rabia's suffering bed
The wise men gathered, gazing gravely—
“ Daughter of God ! ” the youngest said,
Endure thy Father's chastening bravely ;

They who have steeped their souls in prayer
Can every anguish calmly bear."

She answered not, and turned aside,
Though not reproachfully nor sadly ;
" Daughter of God ! " the eldest cried,
" Sustain thy Father's chastening gladly,
They who have learnt to pray aright,
From pain's dark well draw up delight."

Then she spoke out,—“ Your words are fair ;
But, oh ! the truth lies deeper still ;
I know not, when absorbed in prayer,
Pleasure or pain, or good or ill ;
They who God's face can understand
Feel not the motions of His hand."

X.

PLEASURE AND PAIN.

Who can determine the frontier of Pleasure ?

Who can distinguish the limit of Pain ?

Where is the moment the feeling to measure ?

When is experience repeated again ?

Ye who have felt the delirium of passion—

Say, can ye sever its joys and its pangs ?

Is there a power in calm contemplation

To indicate each upon each as it hangs ?

I would believe not ;—for spirit will languish

While sense is most blest and creation most bright ;

And life will be dearer and clearer in anguish

Than ever was felt in the throbs of delight.

See the Fakeer as he swings on his iron,
See the thin Hermit that starves in the wild ;
Think ye no pleasures the penance environ,
And hope the sole bliss by which pain is beguiled ?

No ! in the kingdoms those spirits are reaching,
Vain are our words the emotions to tell ;
Vain the distinctions our senses are teaching,
For Pain has its Heaven and Pleasure its Hell !

XI.

THE PEACE OF GOD.

"The blessed shall hear no vain words, but only the word—Peace."

KUMAN, chap. xix. v. 63.

PEACE is God's direct assurance
To the souls that win release
From this world of hard endurance—
Peace—he tells us—only Peace.

There is Peace in lifeless matter—
There is Peace in dreamless sleep—
Will then Death our being shatter
In annihilation's deep?

Ask you this? O mortal trembler!
Hear the Peace that Death affords—
For your God is no dissembler,
Cheating you with double words:—

To this life's inquiring traveller,
Peace of knowledge of all good ;
To the anxious truth-unraveller,
Peace of wisdom understood :—

To the loyal wife, affection,
Towards her husband, free from fear,—
To the faithful friend, selection
Of all memories kind and dear :—

To the lover, full fruition
Of an unexhausted joy,—
To the warrior, crowned ambition,
With no envy's base alloy :—

To the ruler, sense of action,
Working out his great intent,—
To the prophet, satisfaction
In the mission he was sent :—

To the poet, conscious glory
 Flowing from his Father's face ;—
Such is Peace in holy story,
 Such is Peace in heavenly grace.

XII.

CHRISTIAN ENDURANCE.

TO H. M.

MORTAL ! that standest on a point of time,
With an eternity on either hand,
Thou hast one duty above all sublime,
Where thou art placed serenely there to stand :

To stand undaunted by the threatening death,
Or harder circumstance of living doom,
Nor less untempted by the odorous breath
Of Hope, that rises even from the tomb.

For Hope will never dull the present pain,
And Time will never keep thee safe from fall,
Unless thou hast in thee a mind to reign
Over thyself, as God is over all.

'Tis well in deeds of good, though small, to strive,
 'Tis well some part of ill, though small, to cure,
'Tis well with onward, upward, hopes to strive,
 Yet better and diviner to endure.

What but this virtue's solitary power,
 Through all the lusts and dreams of Greece and Rome,
Bore the selected spirits of the hour
 Safe to a distant, immaterial home?

What but this lesson, resolutely taught,
 Of Resignation,* as God's claim and due,
Hallows the sensuous hopes of Eastern thought,
 And makes Mohammed's mission almost true?

But in that patience was the seed of scorn—
 Scorn of the world and brotherhood of man ;
Not patience such as in the manger born
 Up to the cross endured its earthly span.

* Vide page 34, and note.

Thou must endure, yet loving all the while,
Above, yet never separate from, thy kind,—
Meet every frailty with the gentlest smile,
Though to no possible depth of evil blind.

This is the riddle thou hast life to solve ;
But in the task thou shalt not work alone :
For, while the worlds about the sun revolve,
God's heart and mind are ever with his own !

THE KIOSK *.

BENEATH the shadow of a large-leaved plane,
Above the ripple of a shallow stream,
Beside a cypress-planted cemetery,
In a gay-painted trellis-worked kiosk,
A company of easy Muslims sat,
Enjoying the calm measure of delight
God grants the faithful even here on earth.
Most pleasantly the bitter berry tastes,
Handed by that bright-eyed and neat-limbed boy ;
Most daintily the long chibouk is filled
And almost before emptied, filled again ;
Or, with a free good-will, from mouth to mouth

* Story-telling is, now as ever, the delight of the East: in the coffee and summer houses, at the corners of the streets, in the courts of the mosque, sit the grave and attentive crowd, hearing with childly pleasure the same stories over and over again, applauding every new turn of expression or incident, but not requiring them any more than the hearers of a European sermon.

Passes the cool Nargheelee * serpentine.
So sit they, with some low occasional word
Breaking the silence in itself so sweet,
While o'er the neighbouring bridge the caravan
Winds slowly in one line interminable
Of camel after camel, each with neck
Jerked up, as sniffing the far desert air.
Then one serene old Turk, with snow-white beard
Hanging amid his pistol-hilts profuse,
Spoke out—"Till sunset all the time is ours,
And we should take advantage of the chance
That brings us here together. This my friend
Tells by his shape of dress and peaked cap
Where his home lies : he comes from furthest off,
So let the round of tales begin with him."
Thus challenged, in his thoughts the Persian dived,
And, with no waste of faint apologies,
Related a plain story of his life,
Nothing adventurous, terrible, or strange,
But, as he said, a simple incident,
That any one there present might have known.

* The hookah of the Levant.

THE PERSIAN'S STORY.

“Wakedi, and the Heshemite, and I,
Called each the other friend, and what we meant
By all the meaning of that common word,
One tale among a hundred—one round pearl
Dropped off the chain of daily circumstance
Into the Poet's hand—one luscious fruit
Scarce noticed in the summer of the tree,
Is here preserved, that you may do the like.

“The Ramadhan's long days (where'er they fall
Certain to seem the longest of the year)
Were nearly over, and the populous streets
Were silent as if haunted by the plague;
For all the town was crowding the bazaar,
To buy new garments, as beseemed the time,
In honour of the Prophet and themselves.
But in our house my wife and I still sat,
And looked with sorrow in each other's faces.
It was not for ourselves—we well could let

Our present clothes serve out another year,
And meet the neighbours' scoffs with quiet minds;
But for our children we were grieved and shamed;
That they should have to hide their little heads,
And take no share of pleasure in the Feast,
Or else contrast their torn and squalid vests
With the gay freshness of their playmates' garb.
At last my wife spoke out—' Where are your friends?
Where is Wakedi? where the Heshemite?
That you are worn and pale with want of gold,
And they perchance with coin laid idly by
In some closed casket, or in some vain sport
Wasted, for want of honest purposes?'
My heart leapt light within me at these words,
And I, rejoicing at my pain as past,
Sent one I trusted to the Heshemite,
Told him my need in few plain written words,
And, ere an hour had passed, received from him
A purse of gold tied up, sealed with his name:
And in a moment I was down the street,
And, in my mind's eye, chose the children's clothes.
—But between will and deed, however near,

There often lies a gulf impassable.
So, ere I reached the gate of the Bazaar,
Wakedi's slave accosted me—his breath
Cut short with haste ; and from his choking throat
His master's message issued word by word.
The sum was this :—a cruel creditor,
Taking the 'vantage of the season's use,
Pressed on Wakedi for a debt, and swore
That, unless paid ere evening-prayer, the law
Should wring by force the last of his demand.
Wakedi had no money in the house,
And I was prayed, in this his sudden strait,
To aid him, in my duty as a friend.
Of course I took the Heshemite's sealed purse
Out of my breast, and gave it to the slave ;
Yet I must own, oppressed with foolish fear
Of my wife's tears, and, might be, bitter words,
If empty-handed I had home returned,
I sat all night, half-sleeping, in the mosque,
Beneath the glimmering feathers, eggs, and lamps,
And only in the morning nerved my heart
To tell her of our disappointed pride.

She, when I stammered out my best excuse,
Abashed me with her kind approving calm,
Saying—‘The parents’ honour clothes the child.’
Thus I grew cheerful in her cheerfulness,
And we began to sort the children’s vests,
And found them not so sordid after all.
‘This might be turned—that stain might well be hid—
This remnant might be used.’ So we went on
Almost contented, till surprised we saw
The Heshemite approach, and with quick steps
Enter the house, and in his hand he showed
The very purse tied up, sealed with his name,
Which I had given to help Wakedi’s need!
At once he asked us, mingling words and smiles,
‘What means this secret? you sent yester morn
Asking for gold, and I, without delay,
Returned the purse containing all I had.
But I too found myself that afternoon
Wanting to buy a sash to grace the feast;
And sending to Wakedi, from my slave
Received this purse I sent you the same morn
Unopened.’ ‘Easy riddle,’ I replied,

‘ And, as I hope, no miracle for me—
That what you gave me for my pleasure’s fee
Should serve Wakedi in his deep distress.’
And then I told him of Wakedi’s fate :
And we were both o’ercome with anxious care
Lest he, obeying his pure friendship’s call,
Had perilled his own precious liberty,
Or suffered some hard judgment of the law.
But to our great delight and inward peace,
Wakedi a few moments after stood
Laughing behind us, ready to recount,
How Allah, loving the unshrinking faith
With which he had supplied his friend’s desire
Regardless of his own necessity,
Assuaged the creditor’s strong rage, and made
His heart accessible to gentle thoughts,
Granting Wakedi time to pay the debt.
—Thus our three tales were gathered into one,
Just as I give them you, and with the purse
Then opened in the presence of the three—
We gave my children unpretending vests,

Applied a portion to Wakedi's debts,
And bought the Heshemite the richest sash
The best silk merchant owned in the Bazaar."

Soon as he ceased, a pleasant murmur rose,
Not only of applause, but of good words,
Dwelling upon the subject of the tale ;
Each to his neighbour in low utterance spoke
Of Friendship and its blessings, and God's grace,
By which man is not left alone to fight
His daily battle through a cruel world.

The next in order, by his garb and look,
A Syrian merchant seemed, who made excuse
That he had nothing of his own to tell,
But if the adventure of one like himself,
Who roamed the world for interchange of gain,
Encountering all the quaint varieties
Of men and nature, pleased them, it was theirs.

THE SYRIAN'S STORY.

“ A merchant of Damascus, to whom gain
Tasted the sweetest when most boldly won,
Crossed the broad Desert, crossed th’ Arabian Gulf,
Entered with goods the far secluded land
That Franks call Abyssinia, and became
The favourite and companion of its King.
And little wonder—for to that rude chief
He spoke of scenes and sights so beautiful,
Of joys and splendours that had hardly place
In his imagined Paradise, of arts
By which all seasons were made sweet and mild.
In the hot sandy winds and blazing sun,
He spoke of alleys of delicious shade,
Of coloured glass that tempered the sharp light,
Of fountains bubbling up through heaps of flowers,
And boys and maidens fanning genial airs :
In the bleak snow-time, when the winds rung shrill
Through the ill-jointed palace, he pourtrayed

The Syrian winter of refreshing cool,
And breezes pregnant with all health to man.
At last the King no more could hold in check
The yearning of his heart, and spoke aloud—
‘Friend ! what is now to me my royal state,
My free command of all these tribes of men,
My power to slay or keep alive,—my wealth,
Which once I deemed the envy of all kings,—
If by my life amid these wild waste hills
I am shut out from that deliciousness
Which makes existence heavenly in your words,—
If I must pass into my Father’s tomb,
These pleasures all untasted, this bright earth
To me in one dark corner only known ?
Why should I not, for some short time, lay by
My heavy sceptre, and with wealth in hand,
And thee to guide and light me in my path,
Travel to those fair countries God-endowed,—
And then with store of happy memories,
And thoughts, for pauses of the lion-hunt,
And tales to tell, to keep the evenings warm,
Return once more to my paternal throne ? ’

Gladly the merchant, weary with his stay
In that far land, and fearing lest kind force
Might hold him prisoner there for some long time,
Accepted the proposal, praised the scheme
As full of wise, and just, and manly thought,
Recounted the advantages the land
Would from their King's experience surely draw :
And ended by determining the day
When they two should set out upon their road,
Worthily armed, with ample store of gold,
And gems adroitly hid about their dress.

“ The day arrived, big with such change of life
To this brave Monarch : in barbaric pomp
Were gathered all the princes of the race,
All men of name and prowess in the state,
And tributary chiefs from Ethiop hills.
With mingled admiration and dismay
They heard the King announce he should go forth
To distant nations ere that sun went down ;—
That for two years they would not see his face ;
But then he trusted God he should return
Enriched with wisdom, worthier of his rule,

And able to impart much good to them.
Then to the trust of honorable men
Committing separate provinces and towns,
And over all, in delegated rule,
Establishing his favourite brother's power,
Amid applauses, tumults, prayers, and tears,
Towards the Arabian Gulf he bent his way.
A well-manned boat lay ready on the shore ;
A prosperous gale was playing on the sea ;
And after some few days of pleasant sail,
From Djedda's port to Mekkeh's blessed walls
The Merchant and the King advanced alone.

“ At every step he made in this new world,
At every city where they stopped a while
On their long journey, with the fresh delight
His eye was ravished and his heart was full ;
And when at last upon his vision flashed
Holy Damascus,* with its mosques, and streams,
A gem of green set in the golden sand,

* Statius (Sylv. 1, 6, 14), speaks of Syrian plums, as, “ Quod ramis *pia* germinat Damascus.”

The King embraced his friend ; and, thanking God
That he had led him to this heaven, despised
The large dominion of his Afric birth,
And vowed he 'd rather be a plain man there,
Than rule o'er all the sources of the Nile.
Thus in Damascus they were safely housed,
And as the King's gold through the Merchant's hands
Flowed freely, friends came pouring in amain,
Deeming it all the fortunate reward
Of the bold Merchant's venture ; for he spoke
To none about the secret King, who seemed
Rather some humble fond companion brought
From the far depths of that gold-teeming land.
Oh ! what a life of luxury was there !
Velvet divans, curtains of brodered silk,
Carpets, as fine a work of Persian looms
As those that in the Mosque at Mekkeh lie ;
The longest, straitest, pipes in all the East,
With amber mouth-pieces as clear as air ;
Fresh sparkling sherbet, such as Franks adore ; *
And maidens who might dazzle by their charms

* Our champagne is the favourite sherbet of the East.

The Sultan seated in his full Hareem.
The months rolled on with no diminished joys,
Nay, each more lavish in magnificence
Than that which went before ; and, drunk with pleasure,
The Merchant lost all sense and estimate
Of the amount of wealth he and the King
Had brought together from that distant clime.
The gold was soon exhausted, yet remained
A princely store of jewels, which for long
Sustained that fabric of enchanted life,
But one by one were spent and past away ;
Then came the covert sale of splendours bought ;
Then money borrowed easily at first,
But every time extracted with more pain
From the strong griping clutch of usury.
But all the while, unwitting of the truth,
Without the faintest shadow of distrust
Of his friend's prudence, care, or honesty,
Taking whatever share of happiness
He gave him with an absolute content,
Tranquil the Abyssinian King remained,
Confiding and delighted as a child.

“ At last the hour came on, though long delayed,
When the bare fact before the Merchant's eyes
Stood out, that he was ruined without hope !
What could be done ? Not only for himself,
But for his friend, that poor deluded King,
Become an useless burthen on his hands ?
He knew his doors, that guests so lately thronged,
Would soon be thronged as thick with creditors ;
And he himself, by law, be forced to pay
In person, where he had no gold to give :
He must escape that very hour—but how ?
Without one good piastre to defray
His cost upon the road, or bribe the porters
To set his creditors on some false scent.
Then rose a thought within him, and, it seemed,
Was gladly welcomed by a sudden start,
And a half-cruel, half-compassionate, smile.
For straight he sought the Abyssinian King,
Whom he found watching with a quiet smile
The gold fish in the fountain gleam and glide.
He led him, ever ductile, by the hand
Down many streets into a close-built court
Where sat together many harsh-browed men,

Whom he accosted thus: 'Friends, I want gold;
Here is a slave I brought with me last year
From Abyssinia; he is stout and strong,
And, but for some strange crotchets in his head
Of his own self-importance and fond dreams,
Which want a little waking now and then
By means that you at least know well to use,
A trusty servant and long-headed man;
Take him at your own price—I have no time
To drive a bargain.' 'Well, so much,'—one cried—
'So much' another. 'Bring your purses out,
You have bid most, and let me count the coin.'
Dumb as a rock the Abyssinian King,
Gathering the meaning of the villany,
Stood for a while; then, in a frantic burst,
Rushed at his base betrayer, who, his arm
Avoiding, gathered up his gold and fled:
And the slave-merchant, as a man to whom
All wild extremities of agony
Were just as common as his daily bread,
Shouted, and like a felon in a cage
The King was soon forced down by many hands.

“None know what afterwards became of him :
Haply he died, as was the best for him ;
And, but that the false Merchant, proud of crime,
Oft told the story as a good device
And laughable adventure of his craft,
The piteous fate of that deluded King
Had been as little known to any one
As to the subjects of his distant realm,
Who still, perchance, expect their Lord's return,
Laden with all the wealth of Eastern lands.”

'Twas strange to see how upon different minds
The Syrian's tale with different meanings fell.
One moralised of the vicissitudes
Of mortal greatness, how the spider's web
Is just as safe from harm and violence
As the bright-woven destiny of kings.
Another cursed the Merchant for his deed :
And a third laughed aloud and laughed again,
Considering the strange contrast of the pomp
Of that departure from a regal throne
And grand commission of so many powers,

With the condition of a kennelled slave ;
For true it is, that nothing moves to mirth
More than the gap that fortune often leaps,
Dragging some wretched man along with her.

To an Egyptian soldier, scarred and bronzed,
The duty of narration came the next :
Who said, " that soldiers' tales were out of place
Told in calm places and at evening hours :
His songs required the music of the gun :
He could recount a thousand desperate feats,
Hair-breadth escapes and miracles of war,
Were he but cowering round a low watch-fire
Almost in hearing of the enemy ;
But now his blood was cold, and he was dull,
And even had forgot his own wild past.
They all had heard—had East and West not heard
Of Mehemet Ali and of Ibrahim ?
It might be that the Great Pasha was great,
But he was fond of trade—of getting gold,
Not by fair onslaught and courageous strength,
But by mean interchange with other lands

Of produce better in his own consumed ;
This was like treason to a soldier's heart ;
And all he hoped was that when Ibrahim
Sat in his father's seat, he would destroy
That flight of locusts—Jew, and Greek, and Frank,
Who had corrupted Egypt and her power,
By all their mercenary thoughts and acts,
And sent him there, brave soldier as he was,
To go beg service at the Sultan's hand.
Yet Ibrahim's heart was still a noble one ;
No man could contradict him and not fear
Some awful vengeance ;—was this story known ?”

THE EGYPTIAN'S STORY.

Once, when in Syria he had let war loose,
And was reducing, under one strong sway,
Druses, and Christians, and Mohammedans,
He heard that his lost child, the favourite
Born of a favourite wife, had been let fall
By a young careless Nubian nurse, and hurt,

So as to cripple it through all its days.
No word of anger passed the warrior's lips,—
No one would think the story on his mind
Rested a single moment. But due time
Brought round his glad return, and he once more
Entered his hall, within which, on each side,
Long marble stairs curved towards the balcony,
Where right and left the women's chambers spread ;
Upon the landing stood the glad Hareem
To welcome him with music, shouts, and songs ;
Yet he would not ascend a single step,
But cried—" Where is the careless Nubian girl
That let my child fall on the stony ground ? "
Trembling and shrieking down one marble flight
She was pushed forward, till she reached the floor :
Then Ibrahim caught her in one giant grasp,
Dragged her towards him, and one brawny hand
Tight-twisting in her long and glossy hair,
And with the other drawing the sharp sword
Well known at Nezib and at Koniah,
Sheer from her shoulders severed the young head,
And casting it behind him, at few bounds

Cleared the high stair and to his bosom pressed
The darling wife his deed had just reveng'd.
O! he is god-like in his hour of rage!
His wrath is like the plague that falls on man
With indiscriminate fury, and for this
His name is honoured through the spacious East,
Where all things powerful meet their just reward."

The Soldier paused ; and surely some one else
Had taken up the burden of a tale ;
But at that moment through the cypress stems
Shot the declining crimson of the sun
Full on the faces of that company,
Who for some instants in deep silence watched
The last appearance of the ruddy rim,
And, little needing the clear warning voice
Which issued round the neighbouring minaret,—
Bidding all earthly thoughts and interests
Sink in their breasts as sunk that fiery sun—
Bowed, old and young, their heads in blest accord,
Believers in one Prophet and one God !

THE TENT.

WHY should a man raise stone and wood

Between him and the sky ?

Why should he fear the brotherhood

Of all things from on high ?

Why should a man not raise his form

As shelterless and free

As stands in sunshine or in storm

The mountain and the tree ?

Or if we thus, as creatures frail

Before our time should die,

And courage and endurance fail

Weak Nature to supply ;—

Let us at least a dwelling choose,

The simplest that can keep

From parching heat and noxious dews

Our pleasure and our sleep.

The Fathers of our mortal race,
While still remembrance nursed
Traditions of the glorious place
Whence Adam fled accursed,—
Rested in tents, as best became
Children, whose mother earth
Had overspread with sinful shame
The beauty of her birth.

In cold they sought the sheltered nook,
In heat the airy shade,
And oft their casual home forsook
The morrow it was made ;
Diverging many separate roads,
They wandered, fancy-driven,
Nor thought of other fixed abodes
Than Paradise or Heaven.

And while this holy sense remained,
'Mid easy shepherd cares,
In tents they often entertained
The Angels unawares :

And to their spirits' fervid gaze
The mystery was revealed,
How the world's wound in future days
Should by God's love be healed.

Thus we, so late and far a link
Of generation's chain,
Delight to dwell in tents and think
The old world young again ;
With Faith as wide and Thought as narrow
As theirs, who little more
From life demanded than the sparrow
Gay-chirping by the door.

The Tent ! how easily it stands,
Almost as if it rose
Spontaneous from the green or sand,
Express for our repose :
Or, rather, it is we who plant
This root, where'er we roam,
And hold, and can to others grant,
The comforts of a home.

Make the Divan—the carpets spread,
The ready cushions pile ;
Rest, weary heart ! rest, weary head !
From pain and pride awhile :
And all your happiest memories woo,
And mingle with your dreams
The yellow desert glimmering through
The subtle veil of beams.

We all have much we would forget—
Be that forgotten now !
And placid Hope, instead, shall set
Her seal upon your brow :
Imagination's prophet eye
By her shall view unfurled
The future greatnesses that lie
Hid in the Eastern world.

To slavish tyrannies their term
Of terror she foretells ;
She brings to bloom the faith whose germ
In Islam deeply dwells ;

Accomplishing each mighty birth
That shall one day be born
From marriage of the western earth
With nations of the morn !

Then fold the Tent—then on again ;
One spot of ashen black,
The only sign that here has lain
The traveller's recent track :
And gladly forward, safe to find
At noon and eve a home,
Till we have left our Tent behind,
The homeless ocean-foam !

THE BURDEN OF EGYPT.

Our land is the temple of the world, but Egypt will be forsaken, and the land which was once the seat of the divinity will be void of religion. Then this holy seat will be full of idolatry, idols' temples and dead men's tombs. O Egypt! there will remain only a faint show of thy religion, not believed by posterity, and nought but the letters engraven on thy pillars will declare thy pious deeds. The divinity will fly to heaven, and Egypt will be forsaken by God and man. I call upon Thee, most holy River! I foretell unto Thee what will come to pass. Thy waters and holy streams will be filled with blood, and will overflow thy banks, so that the dead will be more numerous than the living; and he that remains alive will be known to be an Egyptian only by his language, but in his deeds he will seem a barbarian.

HERMES TRISMEGISTUS.

THE BURDEN OF EGYPT.

I.

AFTER the phantasies of many a night,
After the deep desires of many a day,
Rejoicing as an ancient Eremite
Upon the Desert's edge at last I lay :
Before me rose, in wonderful array,
Those works where man has rivalled Nature most,
Those Pyramids, that fear no more decay
Than waves inflict upon the rockiest coast,
Or winds on mountain-steeps, and like endurance boast.

II.

Fragments the deluge of old Time has left
Behind it in its subsidence—long Walls
Of cities of their very names bereft—
Lone Columns, remnants, of majestic halls,—

Rich-traceried chambers, where the night-dew falls,—
All have I seen with feelings due, I trow,
Yet not with such as these memorials
Of the great unremembered, that can show
The mass and shape they wore four thousand years ago.*

III.

The screaming Arabs † left me there alone,
Hoping small gain from one who silent dreamed ;
Till o'er the sand each solemn shadow thrown
Like that of Etna to my fancy seemed,
While in the minaretted distance gleamed
Purple and faint-green relics of the day,
And the warm air grew chill, and then I deemed
I saw a Shape dark-lined against the gray
Slowly approach my couch, but whence I could not say.

* I cannot here enter into chronological arguments, but I may mention that the schemes of Egyptian history, that give it the largest field of time, seem to me the most probable.

† The noise of the Arabs is the greatest drawback to the pleasure of an excursion to the Pyramids—most disagreeable *ciceroni* besetting you on every side and in numbers that renders resistance impossible.

IV.

The starry beauty of its earnest gaze
The heavenly nature of that form revealed,
Seen through the dimness of the evening haze,
That magnified the figure it concealed :
It was the Genius who has trust to wield
The destinies of this our living hour,
Who wills not that the studious heart should shield
Itself from the requirements of his power,
Or seek a selfish rest, whatever tempests lour.

V.

Just at that moment, o'er the stony East
An arch of crimson radiance caught my sight,
That gradually expanded and increast,
Till the large moon arose—and all was light !
Then I beheld advancing opposite
Another Shape, to which the Genius turned
As with a look of anger and despite,
While with a curious eagerness I burned,
And marked the Shape as one that much my weal
concerned.

VI.

It was a female Form—divinely tall,
Yet somewhat bowed, as by invisible weight,
A face whose pallor almost might appal,
Had not the charm of features been so great :
Her gathered amice, like the web of fate,
Was party-coloured, and her forehead bound
With such gold-work as fairies fabricate
In flowery cells, and stamp with letters round
That mock the learned sage and foolish eyes astound.

VII.

But passing by her without word or sign
The first came straight to me and looked awhile,
And laid his hand affectionately on mine,
And veiled his sternness with a gentle smile :
Making, by some unutterable wile,
The homely duties I could hardly prize,
And occupations I had left as vile,
Rise to my conscience like domestic ties,
For which my soul was bound all else to sacrifice.

VIII.

“Thou that art born into this favoured age,
So fertile in all enterprise of thought,
Bound in fresh mental conflicts to engage
The liberties for which your fathers fought,—
Be not thy spirit contemplation-fraught,
Musing and mourning! Thou must act and move,
Must teach your children more than ye were taught,
Brighten intelligence, disseminate love,
And, through the world around, make way to worlds above.

IX.

“The total surface of this spherèd earth
Is now surveyed by philosophic eyes;
Nor East nor West conceals a secret worth—
In the wide Ocean no Atlantis lies:
Nations and men, that would be great and wise,
Thou knowest, can do no more than men have done;
No wondrous impulse, no divine surprise,
Can bring this planet nearer to the sun,—
Civilisation's prize no royal road has won.

x.

“ So not to distant people, to far times,
Turn mind and heart, life's honest artisan !
Seek not miraculous virtues, mighty crimes,
Making a demon or a god of man :
Deem not that ever, wide as mind can scan,
He has been better in the mass than now,
A thing of wider intellectual span,
A creature of more elevated brow,
A being Hope has right more richly to endow.”

xi.

Thus in clear language, not without reproof,
The Spirit of the Present, eagle-eyed,
Conjured me not to lie in thought aloof
From actual life, casting my fancy wide :
I know not what my tongue confused replied ;
But she to whom my anxious looks appealed,
Now seated near in tutelary pride,
Spoke firmly for me, and would nowise yield
A cause she felt at heart, and on so fair a field.

XII.

She cried, " I am the Past ! " and I inherit
Some rights and powers that thou canst not dethrone ;
Therefore, unresting and untiring Spirit,
Thou shalt not make the Poet all thine own :
Time was when all men deemed that I alone
Was chartered his bright presence to possess,
That thou in heart and hand wert cold as stone,
And he would perish in thy rude caress,
Strong to insult and crush, but impotent to bless.

XIII.

" But things are changed : over the Poet's soul
No more my sway and dignities extend,—
Thy influences now his moods control,
If yet my lover, he is more thy friend :
But, since his errant footsteps hither tend,
Some little while by me he must remain,
Some little while beneath my memories bend,
And, when he hath full-stored his eager brain,
He shall return and be thy servitor again.

XIV.

“ And surely here I claim but what I ought
In this my holiest place, my special shrine,
My Land of Egypt! where the human thought
Is linked to Chaos and the light divine,
Disparting darkness—led from line to line
Of regal generations deep engraved,
Or richly wrought in hieroglyphic sign,
On Palaces, Tombs, Temples, that have saved
Their beauty through such storms as rocks have hardly
braved.

XV.

“ Here Fancy bows to Truth : Eldest of Time,
Child of the world's fresh morning, Egypt saw
These Pyramids rise gradually sublime,
And eras pass, whose records, as with awe,
Nature has willed from History to withdraw ;
Yet learn, that on these stones has Abraham gazed,
These regions round acknowledged Joseph's law,
That obelisk * from granite bed was raised,
Ere Moses in its shade sat and Jehovah praised.

* At Hieropolis.

XVI.

" This Nile was populous with floating life
For ages ere the Argo swept the seas,
Ere Helen woke the fires of Grecian strife
Thebes had beheld a hundred dynasties :
And when the Poet, whom all grandeurs please,
Named her the Hundred-gated * and the Queen
Of earthly cities, she had reached the lees
Of her large cup of glory, and was seen
Image and type of what her perfect pride had been.

XVII.

" Here Greece, so often bailed progenitrix
Of mortal wisdom, nurse of ancient lore,
First skilled the ideal beautiful to fix
In plastic forms that shall not perish more,
Seems a pretender, who astutely bore
O'er his young locks a show of reverent grey,—
And Rome, whose greatness thou couldst once adore,

* That is, with the hundred temples : there was no wall round Thebes, therefore no gates ; but the Pylones, or massive gates of the Temples, were evidently the object of foreign astonishment and admiration.

Appears, with all her circumstance of sway,
A mere familiar face, a thing of yesterday.

XVIII.

“ Thus recognise that here the Past is all,
And Thou, the Present, nothing : no display
Of intellectual vigour can appal
Me, who can count the ages as a day :
But lest thy subtle words should lead astray
Him, who to me commits his heart awhile,
Depart to thine own kingdoms far away ;
And we with grave delight will days beguile
Of wintry name, but blest with summer’s blandest smile.”

XIX.

So were we left, the Past and I together ;
But how wise converse did itself unfold,
And how we breathed in that delicious weather
Whose balm was never hurt by heat or cold,
And how the scrolls of Nature were uprolled
Before me in that sacred company,
Are what can never in such words be told

As may seem worthy the reality :
Faint are the shades I give of what was given to me.

XX.

O Thou beneficent and bounteous stream !
Thou Patriarch River ! on whose ample breast
We dwelt the time that full at once could seem
Of busiest travel and of softest rest :
No wonder that thy being was so blest
That gratitude of old to worship grew,
That as a living God Thou wert address,*
And to itself the immediate agent drew
To one creative power the feelings only due.

XXI.

For in thy title and in Nature's truth
Thou art and makest Egypt † : were thy source

* In the oldest form of Egyptian theology of which we have cognizance, the Nile is a God, and the phrase "the proper rising of the God" is found on the tablet in front of the sphynx erected under Nero : the Egyptian theologians also imagined divisions in Heaven similar to those of earth, and could conceive no Paradise without a celestial Nile.

† The Egypt of Homer is the river not the country : all the other

But once arrested in its bubbling youth,
Or turned extravagant to some new course,
By a fierce crisis of convulsive force,
Egypt would cease to be—the intrusive sand
Would smother its rich fields without remorse,
And scarce a solitary palm would stand
To tell, that barren vale was once the wealthiest land.

xxii.

Scarce with more certain order waves the Sun
His matin banners in the Eastern sky,
Than at the reckoned period are begun
Thy operations of fertility ;
Through the long sweep thy bosom swelling high
Expands between the sandy mountain chains,
The walls of Libya and of Araby,
Till in the active virtue it contains
The desert bases sink and rise prolific plains.

Greek names of Egypt are derived from the Nile : its Coptic name was Phiaro—hence probably Pharoah. In somewhat the same sense is India derived from the Indus.

XXIII.

See through the naked length no blade of grass,
No animate sign relieves the dismal strand,
Such it might seem our orb's first substance was,
Ere touched by God with generative hand ;
Yet at one step we reach the teeming land
Lying fresh-green beneath the scorching sun,
As succulent as if at its command
It held all rains that fall, all brooks that run,
And this, O generous Nile ! is thy vast benison.

XXIV.

Whence comest Thou, so marvellously dowered
As never other stream on earth beside ?
Where are thy founts of being, thus empowered
To form a nation by their annual tide ?
The charts are silent ; history guesses wide ;
Adventure from thy quest returns ashamed ;
And each new age, in its especial pride,
Believes that it shall be as that one named,
In which to all mankind thy birth-place was proclaimed.

XXV.

Though Priests upon thy banks, mysterious Water!
Races of men in lofty knowledge schooled,
Though warriors, winning fame through shock and
slaughter,
Sesostris to Napoleon, here have ruled :
Yet has the secret of thy sources fooled
The monarch's strength, the labours of the wise,
And, though the world's desire has never cooled,
Our practised vision little more descries
Than old Herodotus beheld with simple eyes.*

XXVI.

And now in Egypt's late degraded day,
A venerating love attends thee still,

* In all probability the Nile has no one particular source, but is created by the convergence of many small streams, like the Thames and the Rhone. We have an excellent vindication for our geographical ignorance on this point in that of Pliny, with regard to the Rhine. Hundreds of years after the first passage of the river by Roman troops, he writes "that the Rhine takes its rise in the most hidden parts of the earth, in a region of perpetual night, amidst forests for ever inaccessible to human footsteps" (iii. 24.) The source of the Iser seems, too, to have been equally undiscovered.

And the poor Fellah, from thee torn away,
Feels a strange yearning his rude bosom fill ;
Like the remembered show of lake and hill,
That wrings the Switzer's soul, though fortune smile,
Thy mirage haunts him, uncontrolled by will,
And wealth or war in vain the heart beguile
That clings to its mud-hut and palms, beside the Nile.

XXVII.

The Palm ! the Princess of the Sylvan race ;
When islanded amid the level green,
Or charming the wild desert with her grace,
The only verdure of the sultry scene :
Ever, with simple majesty of mien,
No other growth of nature can assume,
She reigns—and most when, in the evening sheen,
The stable column and the waving plume
Shade the delicious lights that all around allume.

XXVIII.

Yet this fair family's most lofty peers
Are dwarfed and stunted to the traveller's eye,

When by them its enormous bulk uprears
Some antique work of pomp or piety,—
Columns that may in height and girth defy
The sturdiest oaks that British glades adorn,
Or chesnuts on the slopes of Sicily,—
And walls that when, by time, to fragments torn,
Still look like towering cliffs by mountain-torrents worn.

XXIX.

'Twould seem as if some people that had held
Their pristine seat in lands of stony hill
Once from their ancient boundaries outswelled,
And took these vales to conquer and to till :
So, where the memory and tradition still
Of temples cut in living rocks remains,
This one Idea the artists' breasts might fill,
Who built amid the Nile's alluvial plains,
First to erect the Rocks and then work out the Fanés.

XXX.

Nor, when the architect's presiding thought
Stood out in noble form, solid and clear,

Was all the hieratic purpose wrought,
Or sacred objects their completion near :
For giant shapes of beauty and of fear
Must make each part for open worship fit,
And mystic language, known to priest and seer,
In very volumes on the walls be writ,
Whose sense is late revealed to searching modern
wit.

XXXI.

Within—without—no little space is lost,
Though hardly obvious to a stranger eye ;
With lavish labour and uncounted cost
Is overlaid each nook of masonry ;
No base too deep—no architrave too high
For these weird records of a nation's lore,
And early pride, that yearned to deify
The names and titles that their monarchs bore—
That what they loved and feared their children might
adore.

XXXII.

Thus the Eternal Trinities,* whose birth
Is in the primal reason of mankind,
Were mingled with the mighty of the earth,
To whom was given the trust to loose and bind
The destinies of nations : thus behind
The God, came close the great victorious King ;
Till with the regal image were combined
All the dim thoughts and phantasies that cling
Round power, for power's own sake, as round a sacred
thing.†

XXXIII.

But walls, once stedfast as their base of rock,
Have crumbled into heaps o'er which we climb,

* The earlier Egyptians arranged their gods habitually in threes ; when the theology got confused, the groups became more numerous and varied—just as new characters crept into the hieroglyphics and the titles of the Kings within the ovals became much longer.

† Throughout Egyptian history the King is divine ; there were temples in front of the Pyramids, and the Labyrinth is the temple of another dynasty ; so down to the latest and basest times. The most contemptible of the Ptolemies is on his coins—"the adorable God ;" and Cleopatra, on her *later* ones—"the younger goddess."

And graceless children leap from block to block,
The spawn of Nature on the graves of Time :
Into the tabernacle's night sublime,
Through the long fissures curious sunrays peep ;
Say ! if the Priests, who led this sacred mime,
Could loose their spicy cerements and the sleep
Of many thousand years,—say, would they smile or weep ?

XXXIV.

If that religion were a subtle wile
Dominion over feeble minds to keep,
If 'twere in truth a mime, they well might smile ;
But if 'twere truth itself, they well might weep ;
And why not truth itself ? truth not less deep
For being fragmentary,—though a gleam,
Not less a portion of the fires that steep
Mankind's brute matter in the heavenly stream,
And lead to waking life through mazy modes of dream.

XXXV.

Theirs was the sin to cumber faith with fear—
To tremble where they should have feared and loved ;

To overlook the glory close and near,
And only reverence it in space removed ;
Their pride of wisdom knew not it behoved
Man's mind to worship but man's heart still more,
Nor could conceive the doctrine thus approved,
When far away from Egypt and its lore,
Judæa's race, once free, the world's bright future bore.

XXXVI.

For right to mediate between God and man
The Art of Greece long combated in vain ;
Far earlier here was shown the heavenly plan
How Nature's self could not that privilege gain ; *
So now organic life can scarce obtain
Its recognition of divinity,—
Past like the godhead of the Grecian fane :
And thus we know Ideas alone can be
Idols divine enough for man's high destiny.

* "The Egyptians thought it more worthy of the Gods to adore them in symbols animated by their creating breath, than in empty images of inert matter ; they regarded the intelligence of animals as connecting them with Gods and men." CHAMPOLLION.

XXXVII.

Who would not feel and satisfy this want,
Watching, as I, in Karnak's roofless halls,
Subnuvolar lights of evening sharply slant
Through pillared masses and on wasted walls?
Who would not learn, there is no form but palls
On the progressive spirit of mankind,
When here around in soulless sorrow falls
That which seemed permanence itself, designed
To rase the sense of death from out all human mind.

XXXVIII.

For near the temple ever lies the tomb,
The dwelling, not the dungeon, of the dead,
Where they abide in glorifying gloom,
In lofty chambers with rich colours spread,
Vast corridors, all carved and decorated
For entertainment of their ghostly lord,
When he may leave his alabaster bed,
And see, with pleasure earth could scarce afford,
These subterranean walls his power and wealth record.

XXXIX.

Often 'twas willed this splendour should be sealed
Not only from profane but priestly eyes,
That to no future gaze might be revealed
The secret palace where a Pharaoh lies,
Amid his world-enduring obsequies ;
And though we, children of a distant shore,
Here search and scan, yet much our skill defies ;
One chance the less, some grains of sand the more,
And never had been found that vault's mysterious door.*

XL.

Not without cause the Persian's brutal hate
The regal corpse of Amasis profaned ;
The Arabs' greed would hardly venerate
These halls of death, while hope of gain remained :
So much for ages with base passions stained ;

* *e. g.* that of Osiris I., discovered by a happy hazard by Belzoni, and from which the alabaster coffin was taken, now in Sir J. Soane's museum. The tombs of the Theban kings, as yet known, are confined to a single dynasty ; there must be somewhere in the neighbourhood the sepulchres of all the others, probably equal in magnificence and interest.

But who are now the spoilers? We, even we;
Now the worst fiends of ruin are unchained,
That sons of science and civility
May bear the fragments home, beyond the midland sea.*

XLI.

Soon will these miracles of eldest art
Be but as quarries hollowed in base stone;†
Soon will the tablets, that might bear their part
In shedding light on tracts of time unknown
Be by caprice or avarice overthrown;
While worn by bitter frost of northern gloom
The obelisks will stand defaced and lone,‡
And god-like effigies, that had for room
The Nile and Desert, pine in narrow prison-gloom.

* "I have travelled through Greece, Egypt, Nubia, and much of Asia Minor, and I have witnessed much destruction of monuments; but everywhere the injurers were Europeans, the pretext science, and the motive gain." PROKESCH.

† Unless the Pasha will have doors erected and watched, and all pillage forbidden, under heavy penalties: the figures are now being stripped from the walls every day.

‡ That of Luxor, at Paris, has already lost the sharpness of the edges.

XLII.

But from that Theban Kingdom desolate
Benevolent winds, opposing the swift tide,
Impelled me onward, nor did once abate
Till the strong Cataract checked my vessel's pride:
How happy in that cool bright air to glide
By Esne, Edfou, Ombos! each in turn
A pleasure, and to other joys a guide;—
Labourless motion—yet enough to earn
Syene's roseate cliffs *—Egypt's romantic bourn.

XLIII.

Tranquil above the rapids, rocks, and shoals,
The Tivoli of Egypt, Philæ lies;
No more the frontier-fortress that controls
The rush of Ethiopian enemies,—
No more the Isle of Temples to surprise,
With Hierophantic courts and porticoes,

* In the quarries of red granite at Syene may be seen the marks of the tools employed a thousand years ago, as fresh as if they had been left yesterday, and the form of an obelisk may be traced, partially dissevered from its native rock.

The simple stranger, but a scene where vies
Dead Art with living Nature to compose
For that my pilgrimage a fit and happy close.

XLIV.

There I could taste without distress of thought
The placid splendours of a Nubian night,
The sky with beautiful devices fraught
Of suns and moons and spaces of white light:
While on huge gateways rose the forms of Might,
Awful as when the People's heart they swayed,
And the grotesque grew solemn to my sight;
And earnest faces thronged the colonnade,
As if they wailed a faith forgotten or betrayed.

XLV.

There too, in calmer mood, I sent aflight
My mind through realms of marvel stretching far,
O'er Abyssinian Alps of fabled height,
O'er Deserts where no paths or guidance are,
Save when, by pilotage of some bright star,

As on the ocean, wends the caravan ; *
And then I almost mourned the mythic bar
That in old times along that frontier ran,
When gods came down to feast with Ethiopian man.

XLVI.

For I remembered races numberless,
Whom still those latitudes in mystery fold,
And asked, what does the Past, my monitress,
For them within her genial bosom hold ?
Where is for them the tale of history told ?
How is their world advancing on its way ?
How are they wiser, better, or more bold,
That they were not created yesterday ?
Why are we life-taught men, why poor ephemerals they ?

XLVII.

Present and Past are question'd there in vain,
And hang their heads unanswering : there in fee

* Canopus, the ornament of the Southern hemisphere, is called by the Arabs, " the caravan-seducer"—a large caravan having been lost in the desert by the driver taking it for Venus.

The Future holds her absolute domain,
Empress of what a third of Earth shall be :
But will our generations live to see
Plenty through those unwatered regions reign,—
Science there dwell as with the white and free,—
To gentle thoughts subside the heated brain,—
And lawless tribes be bound in Order's sacred chain ?

XLVIII.

May such things be ? Ask him who hopes and prays
Rather than reasons. Good men have not quailed
Before the problem, and high justice weighs
The thoughts that prompted, not the deeds that failed.
What matter that the world has mocked and railed ?
What matter that they perish, work undone ?
The prescience of such souls has ever hailed,
Long ere the dawn, the coming of the sun,
And, may be, by such Faith the Light itself is won.

A TRAVELLER'S IMPRESSION ON THE NILE.

WHEN you have lain for weeks together
On such a noble river's breast,
And learnt its face in every weather,
And loved its motions and its rest,—

'Tis hard at some appointed place
To check your course and turn your prow,
And objects for themselves retrace
You past with added hope just now.

The silent highway forward beckons,
And all the bars that reason plants
Now disappointed fancy reckons
As foolish fears or selfish wants.

The very rapids, rocks, and shoals
Seem but temptations which the stream
Hold out to energetic souls,
That worthy of its love may seem.

But life is full of limits ; heed not
One more or less—the forward track
May often give you what you need not,
While wisdom waits on turning back.

...

...

TRANSLATIONS

FROM

GÖTHE'S WEST-ÖSTLICHER DIVAN.

The more passionate Poems in the Divan are almost incapable of translation : I am so little satisfied with my attempts in that quarter, that I confine my selections to those of an ethical character.

PARABLES.



I.

THE nightingale's night-piercing note
 Could Allah, 'mid his light, engage,
And he, for sake of its sweet throat,
 Preserved it in a golden cage.
Our bodies are these shining wires,
 And somewhat close for fluttering wings,
But yet, as common sense requires,
 The little soul still chirps and sings.

II.

Into the gulf of the absorbing sea,
 A drop of water sunk in rain from heaven ;
But what has faith can never cease to be,
 And God gives strength to what has humbly striven.

The genial muscle took it to his care,
And in eternal peace and honour now,
Modestly bright, magnificently fair,
The Pearl is seated on our Sultan's brow.

III.

Believers ! see, with pleasure and surprise,
In the Kuràn a parrot's feather lies,
And make it welcome to this holy place—
The earth's great treasure of supernal grace :
Behold ! how great is God in little things,
As great as in the stars and hearts of kings !
Behold how He, who marks the world roll by,
Has here impressed the presence of his eye,
And cast such splendour on this plumage-down
As hardly clothes the wearer of a crown !
Then, without pride, enjoying gifts divine,
Deserve to dwell in such a sacred shrine.

IV.

Every mortal, small or great,
His subtle cobweb weaves ;

And seated there within elate,
Himself a King believes,
And drives his little feelers out
To strike whoever dares to doubt.

And when, at last, the besom strong
Sweeps all the work away,
It seems an outrage and a wrong
Unheard of till to-day ;
As if that stroke had downward hurled
The noblest palace in the world.

v.

A Pearl of high conceit and race,
Dropped from its shelly native place,
In words like these, with grief oppressed,
The worthy jeweller addressed :—
“ O Friend ! consider what you do ;
Have you the heart to bore me through ?
In one fell moment to destroy
The fair perfection I enjoy ;
To link me with my fellow-creatures,
Of any colours, shapes, or features,

And force me all my life to lie
In such distasteful company ? ”

The merchant answered—“ True, all true ;
But I must make some use of you,—
And if I minded your fine tongue,
How should I get my necklace strung ? ”

VI.

From heaven descending, Jesus brought away
The Gospel's perfect and eternal Book,
And read it to his followers night and day ;
The holy Word its course of blessing took,
Until he bore it back with him again ;
But they had felt it in their heart of hearts,
And each one wrote, by chance and separate parts,
What each one in his memory might retain—
All different: yet no ill from this can flow ;
Not the same gifts or powers to all were given,—
And there is left enough for man to know,
And feed his soul, until it reaches heaven.

CONFESSIONS.

I.

WHAT so hard to hide as Fire—
Fire that smoke reveals by day,
Fire that flames by night display ?
Harder still to hide Desire—
Love that nursed, however still,
Lights the eyes against the will ;
Yet harder than both these to hide,
The Song, which is the poet's pride ;
Has he sung it fresh and new ?
It possesses him all through ;
Has he neatly writ it out ?
It must charm the world without ;
And he reads it to all he sees,
Whether it please them or whether it tease.

II.

I was weeping at midnight,
For the loss of my delight ;
When the Spirits floated near me,
And I blushed that they should hear me ;
“ Spirits of the night ! ” I cried,
“ That were wont to pass beside,
And admire me calmly sleeping,
Now you find me madly weeping ;
Knew ye only what I miss,
Ye 'd not think me worse for this.”
But the Spirits of the night,
With their faces long and white,
Floated by—nor cared a jot
Whether I were a fool or not.

REFLECTIONS.



I.

DEMAND not by what road or portal
Into God's city thou art come ;
But where thou tak'st thy place as mortal,
Remain in peace, and make thy home.

Then look around thee for the Wise ;
Look for the Strong, who there command ;—
Let Wisdom teach thee what to prize ;
Let Power direct and brace thy hand.

If, doing all that should be done,
Faithful and calm the State approve thee,
Know, thou wilt gain the hate of none,
And many will rejoice to love thee.

II.

Honor the greeting of a stranger's hand !
Prize it, as if it were an ancient friend's :
Though, after some short words, you say, Farewell !
You going East, he West,—path facing path,—
Yet, after many years, at some strange hour,
If your ways cross, you cry, with sudden joy,
“ Yes—it is he ! ’Twas there we met ; ”—as if
So many a toilsome day o'er land and sea,
So many an orbit of the unresting Earth,
That time and this had never lain between.

Then talk with fair exchange, share all your gains,
And let old sympathies be wove anew :
The first fresh greeting's worth a thousand others ;
So meet all greetings with a kind return.

III.

WHY lapse my hours so wearily away ?
Life may be short, but, oh ! how long the day !
Still onward yearns the heart, still strives to go,
An' it be heaven-ward, who can rightly know ?
But forward, forward, is its ceaseless range,
As if it wished its very self to change ;
And then to some best-loved one's breast it flies,
And rests in unreflecting Paradise,
Till the life-whirlpool drives it forth again,
At one sad point, one only, to remain,—
When, all desire, all disappointment, past,
It leaves the struggle, self-befooled at last.

IV.

THE maiden's eye that beckons as it glances,
The festive smile that round the goblet dances,
The kind salute of one that can command,
The autumn sunshine o'er a teeming land,—
These things are lovely, but far lovelier yet
The look, once seen, you never can forget,—
With which the needy hand its gentle force
Urges upon you in your daily course ;—
So thankful for the mite you well afford,
So much for him, so little from your hoard :
No heartier, livelier, greeting could you chuse,
And he who feels it never can refuse.

V.

My starting point? I ask and ask in vain :

How I have come thus far, I scarce can say ;
And here, and at this hour, pleasure and pain

Meet like dear friends upon a festal day :
O happy lot ! when two are blent in one,
He who alone would smile must weep alone.

VI.

ONE thing before another goes,

And one behind another ;
Then bold, and brave, and swift dispose
Your steps through life—my brother !
To cull the flowers that skirt his track
Too long the traveller lingers,
Yet nothing holds him basely back
Like Falsehood's griping fingers.

PROVERBS.

To one, who in an evil time is born,
All better days will be for grief or scorn.

If I am to show you this neighbourhood,
You must mount these steps for the view to be good.

My lot on earth how grand ! how fair a soil !
Time my possession,—time my field of toil.

If you would not be robbed of each whit of your pelf,
Keep your road, and your gold, and your faith to yourself.

The silent man for all the world need never care a feather,
The man beneath the covert tongue is hidden altogether.

Be it your unerring rule
Ne'er to contradict a fool ;
For if folly dare but brave you,
All your wisdom cannot save you.

How can it your high mind surprise,
To find that you have enemies,
When between you and them the bar
Rests in your being what you are ?

If God no better neighbour were
Than you to me and I to you,
How little credit should we share,
Who now have all and more than due !

Ye fools ! esteeming in your proper fate
Some wondrous meaning—what are you and I ?
As Islam to one God is consecrate,
Parts of one Islam must we live and die.

For what am I most thankful when at prayer ?
That Allah parts our knowledge and our woes ;
Would not each patient speedily despair
Knew he his ill as the Physician knows ?

As in our world's close multitude
Each one would have the upper hand,
Let those who choose be rough and rude,
. . . But in the things they understand.

On the immovable enduring land
The tide of passion vents its rage in vain ;
With pearls of poesy it sows the strand,—
And this for Life is surely glorious gain.

All who have striven to earn a hero's fame,
Must with delight a hero praise and name ;
He who the heats and chills of life has known
Can feel the worth of man, and he alone.

Writing, rhyming, night and day !

That this displeases me is true :

Who drive the poetry away

From our poor earth ? You, poets, you !

Many a light the Orient throws,

O'er the midland waters brought ;

He alone who Hafiz knows

Knows what Calderon has thought.

WRITTEN IN GREECE.

ON RETURNING TO GREECE IN 1842.*

TEN years ago I deemed that if once more
I trod on Grecian soil, 'twould be to find
The presence of a great informing mind
That should the glorious past somehow restore ;
And now I cry, with disappointment sore,
"Is it for this that Greece has striven and pined,—
These her rich vales with scarce a labouring hind,
These silent havens on this favoured shore ?"
Still patience—patience with the toils of Time ;
The air of freedom is not always health,
Yet vain without it every hope sublime :
Better a nation's growth, however slow,
That is its own, than any strength or wealth
Conferred or cultured by a friend or foe.

* These Poems are an Appendix to the "Memorials of a Tour in Greece," published in 1834.

DELPHI.

AN ELEGY.

BENEATH the vintage moon's uncertain light,
And some faint stars that pierced the film of cloud,
Stood those Parnassian peaks before my sight,
Whose fame throughout the ancient world was loud.

Still could I dimly trace the terraced lines
Diverging from the cliffs on either side ;
A theatre whose steps were filled with shrines
And rich devices of Hellenic pride ;

Though brightest daylight would have lit in vain
The place whence gods and worshippers had fled ;
Only, and they too tenantless, remain
The hallowed chambers of the pious dead.

Yet those wise architects an ample part
To Nature gave in their religious shows,
And thus, amid the sepultures of Art,
Still rise the Rocks and still the Fountain flows.

Desolate Delphi ! pure Castalian spring !
Hear me avow that I am not as they—
Who deem that all about you ministering
Were base impostors, and mankind their prey :

That the high names they seemed to love and laud
Were but the tools their paltry trade to ply ;
This pomp of Faith a mere gigantic fraud,
The apparatus of a mighty lie !

Let those that will believe it ; I, for one,
Cannot thus read the history of my kind ;
Remembering all this little Greece has done
To raise the universal human mind :



I know that hierarchs of that wondrous race,
By their own faith alone, could keep alive
Mysterious rites and sanctity of place,—
Believing in whate'er they might contrive.

It may be, that these influences, combined
With such rare nature as the priestess bore,
Brought to the surface of her stormy mind
Distracted fragments of prophetic lore :

For, howsoe'er to mortals' probing view
Creation is revealed, yet must we pause,
Weak to dissect the futile from the true,
Where'er imagination spreads her laws.

So now that dimmer grows the watery light,
And things each moment more fantastic seem,
I fain would seek if still the Gods have might
Over the undissembling world of dream :

I ask not that for me aside be cast
The solemn veil that hides what is decreed ;
I crave the resurrection of the past,
That I may know what Delphi was indeed !

Oct. 8th, 1842.

THE TOMB OF LAIUS.

WHERE Delphi's consecrated pass
 Bœotia's misty region faces,*
Rises a tomb-like stony mass
 Amid the bosky mountain-bases;
It seems no work of human care,
 But many rocks split off from one:
Laius, the Theban king, lies there,—
 His murderer Œdipus, his son.

No pilgrim to the Pythian shrine
 But marked the spot with decent awe,
In presence of a power divine,
 O'erruling human will and law:
And to some thoughtful hearts that scene—
 Those paths, that mound, those browsing herds,
Were more than e'er that tale had been,
 Arrayed in Sophoclean words.

* At the "Schiste Hodos," or "Triodos."

So is it yet,—no time or space
That ancient anguish can assuage,
For sorrow is of every race,
And suffering due from every age;
That awful legend falls to us,
With all the weight that Greece could feel,
And every man is Œdipus,
Whose wounds no mortal skill can heal.

Oh! call it Providence or fate,
The Sphinx propounds the riddle still,
That Man must bear and expiate
Loads of involuntary ill:
So shall Endurance ever hold
The foremost rank 'mid human needs,
Not without faith, that God can mould
To good the dross of evil deeds.

THE FLOWERS OF HELICON.*

THE solitudes of Helicon

Are rife with gay and scented flowers,
Shining the marble rocks upon,
Or 'mid the valley's oaken bowers ;
And ever since young Fancy placed
The Hieron of the Muses here,
Have ceaseless generations graced
This airy Temple year by year.

But those more bright, more precious, flowers
With which old Greece the Muses woo'd,
The Art whose varied forms and powers
Charmed the poetic multitude,

* It is of importance to remind the traveller from Delphi to Attica, to take the mountain road from Lebadæa over the plateau of Helicon, and not the new one along the plain : the latter is *the* carriage-road of Greece, but has no other recommendation.

The Thought that from each deep recess
And fissure of the teeming mind
Sent up its odorous fruitfulness—
What have those glories left behind ?

For from those generous calices
The vegetative virtue shed,
Flew over distant lands and seas,
Waking wide nations from the dead ;
And e'er the parent plants o'erthrown
Gave place to rank and noisome weed,
The giant Roman world was sown
Throughout with that ennobling seed.

And downward thence to latest days
The heritage of Beauty fell,
And Grecian forms and Grecian lays
Prolonged their humanising spell,
Till, when new worlds for man to win
The Atlantic's riven waves disclose,
The wildernesses there begin
To blossom with the Grecian rose.

And all this while in barren shame
Their native land remote reclines,
A mocked and miserable name
Round which some withered ivy twines :
Where, wandering 'mid the broken tombs,
The remnant of the race forget
That ever with such royal blooms
This Garden of the Soul was set.

O breezes of the wealthy West !
Why bear ye not on grateful wings
The seeds of all your life has blest
Back to their being's early springs ?
Why fill ye not these plains with hopes
To bear the treasures once they bore,
And to these Heliconian slopes
Transport civility and lore ?

For now, at least, the soil is free,
Now that one strong reviving breath
Has chased that Eastern tyranny
Which to the Greek was ever death :

Now that, though weak with age and wrongs,
And bent beneath the recent chain,
This motherland of Greece belongs
To her own western world again.

MODERN ATHENS.

IF Fate, though jealous of the second birth
Of names in history raised to high degree,
Permits that Athens yet once more shall be,
Let her be placed as suits the thought and worth
Of those, who, during long oppression's dearth,
Went out from Hydra and Ipsara free,
Making their homestead of the chainless sea,
And hardly touching their enslavèd earth.
So on the shore, in sight of Salamis,
On the Piræan and Phalerian bays,
With no harsh contrast of what was and is,
Let Athens rise ; while in the distance stands,
Like something hardly raised by human hands,
The awful skeleton of ancient days !

DELOS.

THOUGH Syra's rock was passed at morn,
The wind so faintly arched the sail,
That ere to Delos we were borne,
The autumn day began to fail,
And only in Diana's smiles
We reached the bay between the isles.

In sweet serenity of force
She ruled the Heavens without a star—
A sacred image that the course
Of time and thought can hardly mar,—
As dear and nearly as divine
As ever in Ephesian shrine.

I knew that on the spot I trod
Her glorious twins Latona bore,
That for her sake the pitying God
Had fixed the isle afloat before ;
And, fearful of his just disdain,
I almost felt it move again.

For the delicious light that threw
Such clear transparence on the wave,
From the black mastick-bushes drew
Column, and frieze, and architrave,
Like rocks, which, native to the place,
Had something of mysterious grace.

“ Strong was the power of Art to bid
Arise such beauty out of stone,
Yet Paros might as well have hid
Its wealth within its breast unknown,
As for brute Nature to regain
The fragments of the fallen fane.

“ Who can rebuild these colonnades
Where met the ancient festal host,
The peasant from Arcadia's glades,
The merchant from Ionia's coast,
Gladdening their Grecian blood to stand
On one religious Fatherland ? ”

So in my angry discontent
I cried, but calmer thoughts came on,
And gratitude with sorrow blent,
And murmur turned to orison :
I thanked the Gods for what had been,
And Nature for the present scene.

I felt that while in Greece remained
Signs of that old heroic show,
Hope, Memory's sister, so sustained,
Would sink not altogether low,
And Grecian hearts once more might be
Combined in powerful amity.

. . . Long ere the sun's most curious ray
Had touched the morning's zone of pearl,
I and my boat were far away,
Raised on the water's freshening curl;
And barely 'twixt the rose and blue
The island's rim was still in view.

So Delos rests upon my mind,
A perfect Vision of the night,
A picture by moon-rays designed,
And shaded into black and bright,—
A true Idea borne away,
Untroubled by the dreamless day.

THE END.

LONDON :
BRADBURY AND EVANS, PRINTERS, WHITEFRIARS.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

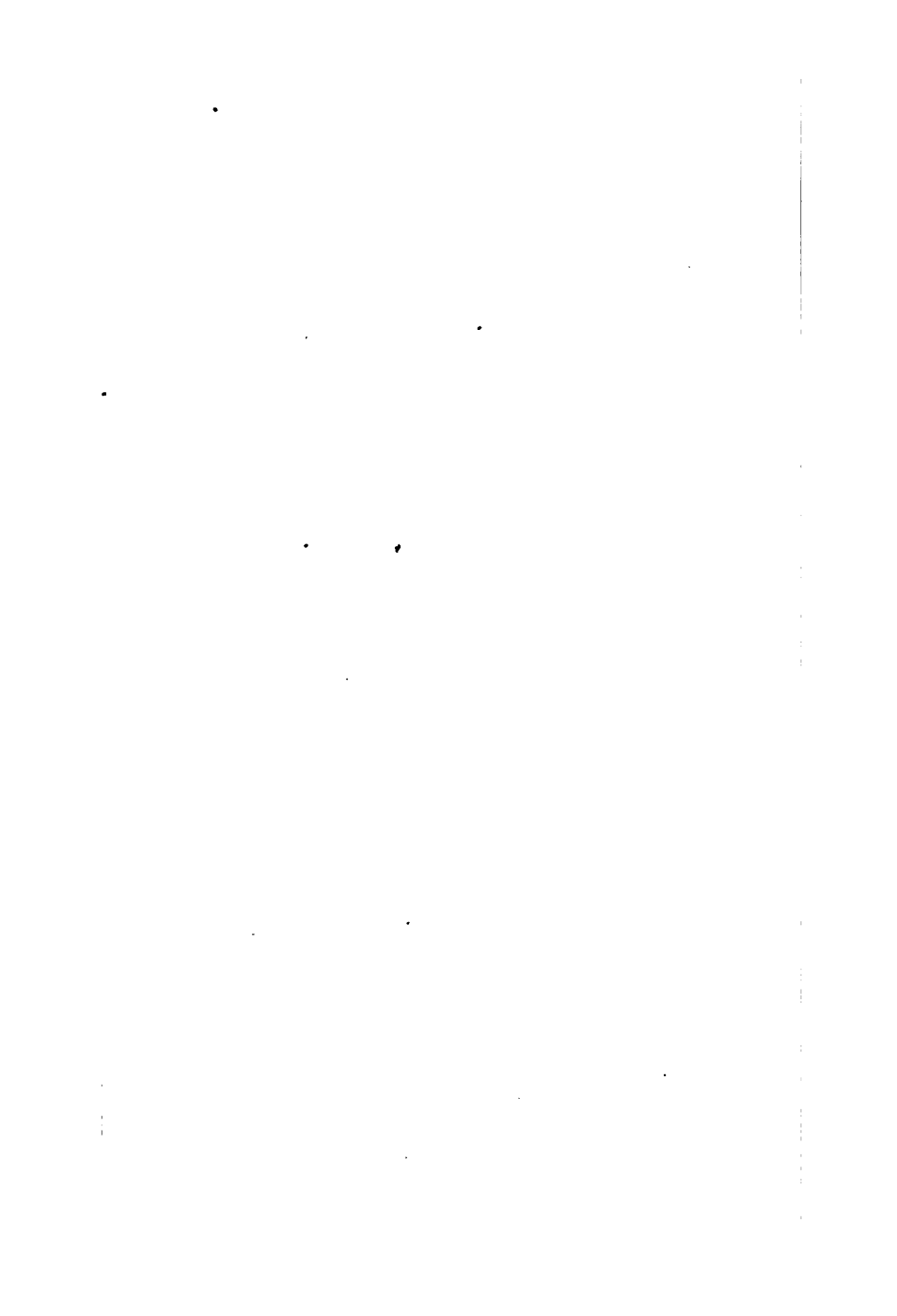
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1. The first part of the document is a list of the names of the members of the committee.

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